# INTERRELIGIOUS COURTSHIP AND MARRIAGE IN NORTHERN IRELAND

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This thesis has been composed by myself and includes my own work only.

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ABSTRACT of THESIS

The thesis deals with Catholic-Protestant courtship and marriage in Northern Ireland, and is divided into three parts.

In the first part the sociological literatures relating both to Northern Ireland and to the study of intermarriage are reviewed. The former is taken to show that interreligious marriages in Northern Ireland are likely to be statistically deviant, interactionally problematic and socially unacceptable, while the latter is reviewed in a critical manner. It is argued that much of the literature on intermarriage is underlaid by a particular conception of intergroup relations which gives rise to assumptions of pathology and discontinuity. An alternative formulation is proposed for studying intermarriage, based around the notion of courtship as a career and drawing on the labelling theory of deviance.

The second part of the thesis deals with selected aspects of interreligious marriage in Northern Ireland. Looked at, in turn, are the extent and incidence of religious intermarriage in Northern Ireland, the historical development of the application of Roman Catholic canon law relating to 'mixed' marriage in Ireland and then Protestant reaction to it, and the relationship between intermarriage and pre-marital residential location in Belfast.

The third and major part of the thesis is devoted to an analysis of the processes by which members of a small, non-random sample of recently married Catholic-Protestant couples in Northern Ireland reached marriage. Five specific groups of couples are distinguished according to the nature of the courtship processes found within their relationships. The ways in which couples deal with the various stipulations of the Roman Catholic Church concerning religiously 'mixed' marriages are explored, as are the

reactions of parents and others to the proposed marriage. The degree to which parental reaction was relatively benign and the reasons for this are pointed out. Some discussion is offered of various aspects of the married life of Catholic-Protestant couples, while finally the implications of the research both for the study of intermarriage and the conflict in Northern Ireland are discussed.

At various points in the thesis comment is directed at the difficulties involved in studying a potentially vulnerable group within a conflict situation.

C O N T E N T S

# PART I : THE SOCIAL AND THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

## Chapter 1 Introduction : The Northern Irish Context

Until the late 1960s Northern Ireland had remained safe from the attentions of sociologists. Still in many ways a provincial backwater until that time, the area had attracted a few anthropologists to its rural fringes (Harris, 1972; Leyton, 1975)[1] but, having no indigenous sociological presence until comparatively recently, accounts of its social structure and organization were left for the most part to geographers, ethnologists and economic historians. With the onset of civil disorder Northern Ireland lost its invisibility. The echoes of the Civil Rights agitation in the United States and the student protests in Europe and elsewhere earlier in the decade in a world still surprised by manifestations of religious fundamentalism drew academic researchers from many countries to observe, study and comment upon the Northern Irish situation.

As Darby (1976) has noted, the results of this initial surge of interest were scarcely fruitful nor longlasting. Many researchers, he charges, treated the Northern Irish situation in an essentially opportunistic fashion, seeing their task as one of assimilating the conflict there into some pre-existing conceptual framework to which they were committed. This led in many cases to the conflict being seen as being "really" or "simply" about class, race, ethnicity, religion or nationality or as being interpretable by analogy with the Southern United States, Cyprus, Rhodesia or Algeria. In consequence, according to Darby (1976, 164) "... the resulting studies were frequently superficial and unashamedly selective, ignoring data which might force a modification of their (sic) original viewpoint".

[1] Both these writers did their fieldwork before the onset of the present 'troubles' in Northern Ireland but only published their work in monograph form in the 1970s.

A number of the earlier studies such as those by Harris (1972) and Rose (1971) must be exempted from Darby's strictures and if some of the force of his critique is also blunted by the subsequent appearance of detailed, methodologically and conceptually sophisticated studies such as those by Burton (1978) and Bew, Gibbon and Patterson (1979), as an overall assessment his contention remains valid. If so, one of the things which seems clearly to be needed in place of the superficial or analogical analyses so far presented are detailed empirical studies of particular aspects of Northern Irish society.[1] The present study is intended to fill that need in respect of Catholic-Protestant inter-marriage in Northern Ireland.[2]

The topic of interreligious marriage in Northern Ireland is one about which very little is known. Where marriage across the religious divide is mentioned in sociological or anthropological studies of Northern Irish society it is usually only to comment on its paucity (Walsh, 1970; Barritt and Carter, 1972; Harris, 1972; Leyton, 1975; Bufwack, 1975; though see also McFarlane, 1979). What is clear, however, is that Northern Ireland is a society where the social acceptability of Catholic marrying Protestant is low. It is also a society where the social arrangements governing contact and interaction between Protestants and Catholics ensure that the social acceptability of Catholic marrying Protestant remains largely untested. This is so because Protestants and Catholics in Northern Ireland tend to live out their lives, as Rose's apt phrase has it, "back-to-back in a face-to-face community" (1971, 306). Furthermore it can be demonstrated that even where interpersonal interaction takes place across the religious divide it has a character which leaves the resulting relationship

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[1] Even studies unrelated to the conflict would be welcome. Very little is known about 'ordinary' social life in Northern Ireland. There are, for example, no studies of family life.

[2] The terms 'Catholic' and 'Protestant' are used here as they are generally in Northern Ireland as designations of communal identity rather than as assessments of belief or practice.

devoid of depth. Both to establish and to pursue a relationship potentially leading to intermarriage requires, in other words, that formidable barriers be surmounted. It is likely that for many they are not even approached.

The social acceptability of Catholic-Protestant marriage

Whatever the actual experiences of particular couples religious intermarriage does not in general meet with approval in Northern Ireland. The rules of the Orange Order, an exclusively Protestant, ultra-loyalist organization, do not permit, for example, anyone to join who is married to a Roman Catholic and prescribe expulsion for any existing member who intermarries (Gray 1972, 195, 199). So too, the attitude of the churches is generally a negative one. None of the major denominations actually prohibits the out-marriage of its members but in all cases they discourage it. In particular, the Roman Catholic Church only countenances the marriage of a Catholic to a non-Catholic under particular and restrictive conditions.

Survey data on attitudes to intermarriage come from two sources: Jenkins and McRae's survey of five towns in Northern Ireland in 1966 and the recent and as yet unpublished Queen's University, Belfast, study of social mobility in Ireland. In the Jenkins and McRae study (1967) 77% of those questioned said that they would 'mind' someone in their family marrying a member of the 'other' religion and 42% of respondents in the Queen's University study said that they would actually be angry if a sister or daughter decided to marry out.[1]

Anthropological accounts of rural life in Northern Ireland (Harris, 1972; Leyton, 1975; Bufwack, 1975; McFarlane, 1979) show intermarriage to be rare and to be generally unwelcome. In 'Aughnaboy', for example, it was the case that "Protestant must marry

[1] All the respondents in both surveys were men. Elliot and Hickie reproduce Jenkins and McRae's table but incorrectly give the percentage as 71% (1971, 81). Figures from the Q.U.B. mobility survey were kindly made available by Dr. Robert Miller.

Protestant and even the suggestion of deviation from this norm was met with shocked incredulity" (Leyton, 1975a, 57). In the village of 'Naghera', not far away and more evenly divided between Catholics and Protestants, the villagers interviewed by Bufwack "felt that it was preferable to marry a member of one's own denomination" (1975, 75) while Harris, who studied a townland on the western border of Northern Ireland, gives several instances of the marginal position which had befallen those who married out.

The most detailed discussion of rural attitudes to Protestant-Catholic intermarriage is to be found in McFarlane (1979). In an interesting study McFarlane analysed the content of gossip, mainly by Protestant informants, about the mixed marriages which had taken place in the village. He shows that villagers employed a complex calculus to do with local assessments of the spouses' affability, respectability and likelihood of religious conversion to evaluate a particular mixed marriage. However, if negative reaction could be mitigated by the application of situational or particularistic criteria, nevertheless it remained true that mixed marriages in general were thought to "let the side down" and to bring shame upon one's family and one's kin.

The social separation of Catholics and Protestants

Self-evidently, prior contact between the potential spouses is a precondition for marriage in Western societies. Very frequently, however, in Northern Ireland the social use of space and patterns of recruitment to co-present interaction are such as to preclude contact which might lead to intermarriage. Briefly enumerated below is some of the available evidence concerning those aspects of social life in Northern Ireland in which the social separation of Catholics and Protestants is most well documented: in education, patterns of residential settlement and associational life.

To look first at education, a very obvious manifestation of social separation (and a particular bête noire of many liberal commentators) is to be found in the institutional arrangements which ensure that Catholics and Protestants in Northern Ireland are educated in separate schools. An early attempt in the life of the Northern Irish state to establish a system of non-denominational schooling foundered on the objection of Protestant and Roman Catholic Churches (Barritt and Carter, 1972, 81-87). Hostility to the new state and a doctrinal conviction that the formation of young Catholics was only possible within an environment having a pervasive Catholic ethos and atmosphere[1] left the Catholic Church uninterested in the proposals. Protestant churchmen, fearful that secular schools would lead to Protestant children being deprived of biblical instruction delivered at the hands of Protestant teachers, also found the proposals unacceptable. In time Protestant opposition lessened and concessions relating to the provision of religious instruction in state schools permitted the transference of Protestant denominational schools to local authority control and funding. Catholic schools, however, retained their 'voluntary' status and since Catholic parents were enjoined on pain of ecclesiastical sanction to send their children only to Catholic schools, a pattern of de facto segregation resulted.

As surveys have fairly consistently shown (Fraser, 1974) separate education, in an apparent contrast with earlier times, does not currently meet with much popular support in Northern Ireland. Nonetheless, the system of parallel schooling has been massively successful in ensuring that Catholics and Protestants are formally socialized in the presence of co-religionists.[2] As Richard Rose (1971, 336) found, "Notwithstanding the preference of Northern Ireland

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[1] On the origins of this conviction see Hornsby-Smith (1978, 7-10).

[2] Segregation does not extend to the tertiary sector except for teacher training, or to secondary technical education (where the numbers involved are in any case small). In the past mixed schools were to be found in a few areas where the Catholic population was insufficient to support a Catholic school.

people for mixed schools, five-sixths have been educated solely in Protestant or Catholic schools. Among people born and educated in Northern Ireland the difference index is extreme - 83 per cent".[1]

How far one can assume on the basis of studies carried out elsewhere (Greeley and Rossi, 1966; Greeley, McCready and McCourt, 1976; Hornsby-Smith and Lee, 1979) that separate schools considered in isolation and without regard to the influence of the home are likely to be as effective as their proponents would wish in producing requisite levels of adult religiosity or as their detractors would claim in developing prejudicial and ethnocentric attitudes is a moot point. However, if one accepts for the schools the central role Blau and Duncan (1967, 354-358) assign to them in the promotion of homogamous marriage and takes into account evidence from a recent study of Catholics in England and Wales which shows marriage to a Catholic in a Catholic ceremony to be positively related to the amount of Catholic schooling received (Hornsby-Smith and Lee, 1979, 112-113), it is not unlikely that religious endogamy is fostered by segregated schooling.

Residential religious segregation in Northern Ireland has its origins in broad historical patterns of population movement and displacement. Over Northern Ireland as a whole the geographical distribution of Protestants and Roman Catholics reflects the settlement patterns which arose out of the 'plantation' of Ulster by Protestant settlers from Scotland in the seventeenth century. The eastern half of Northern Ireland which was most heavily and successfully 'planted' is predominantly Protestant. Locations in which, by contrast, Catholics are numerically predominant are to be found in marginal or peripheral areas to which the plantation did not extend or onto which the native Irish were driven (Compton, 1978, 81-83). The separation

[1]This index is computed by summing the difference between the proportions of each group giving a particular response and dividing by two.

of the two religious groups produced in this manner is borne out for Northern Ireland as a whole by the reports of Rose's (1971) respondents on the religious homogeneity of various components of their relational networks. Two-thirds of Protestants and half of the Catholics questioned in Rose's survey said that their neighbours were co-religionists.

Coupled with the settlement pattern which has its origins in the plantation is the presence as the result of a subsequent population movement of a sizable Catholic minority in Belfast. This presence, the product of what one might almost call a plantation in reverse, was brought about by the migration from rural to urban areas associated with the industrialization of Ireland's north-eastern corner which had its beginnings towards the end of the eighteenth century (Lyons, 1973). Movement into the city by Roman Catholics from the west and the south was accompanied by their concentration within it as migrants from Catholic areas clustered in enclaves peopled by their co-religionists, notably in the Falls area in the west of the city.

A recurrent feature of life in the city which followed the large-scale influx of rural Catholics were periodic outbreaks of communal violence on the boundaries where areas of heavy Catholic settlement adjoined Protestant areas. Collectivized (and one is almost tempted to say ritualized) outbursts of this kind served to define the boundaries between the areas of differing religious composition and solidified patterns of residential settlement into a form still visible today. Thus, Boal and Poole (1979) found that 65% of the Catholic households they surveyed in Belfast in 1972 were located in streets in which less than 10% of the street population was Protestant while Compton (1978, 92) noted, using census data, that 42% of Catholics living in the Greater Belfast area in 1971 were

to be found in a cluster of nine wards in West Belfast in all except one of which Catholics comprised over 90% of the ward population.

As sociologists have recurrently observed, a tendency exists for marital partners to have been residentially propinquitous prior to marriage (see, for example, Katz and Hill, 1958). In situations where residential segregation is both extensive and intensive the propinquitous are likely also to be homogamous with respect to the major variables across which segregation occurs. Intermarriage in these circumstances requires additional effort which residents may prove unwilling to exert.

Relational ties between Catholics and Protestants in the work setting are also limited, though, as Rose's data show, contact at work is rather more extensive than in the neighbourhood. Excluding those who said they did not know the religious affiliations of work-mates, half of the Protestants and one-third of the Catholics surveyed said that they (or their husbands if they were housewives) worked with others all or most of whom had the same confessional background.[1]

Patterns of workplace segregation probably reflect in some measure the residential segregation of Protestants and Catholics already described. One can also adduce, however, a number of additional structural factors which encourage religious segregation in the work place. In the first place the distribution of goods and more particularly the supply of services to both the two main religious groupings are supplied by organizations, enterprises and individuals within the group itself. This has been most notably the case, as already indicated, with regard to education. However, as Harris (1972) has clearly documented in the case of doctors, pharmacists and shopkeepers in 'Ballybeg', other professionals and traders of various kinds can find a ready-made market for what they offer among those of the same religion. In other

[1] Percentages recalculated from Rose's Table X.2 (1971, 305).

words, although its quantitative importance cannot be gauged, work-role interaction and interaction with consumers for part of the business and professional sector takes place on a segregated basis. Another factor ensuring workplace interaction only with in-group members, and one extensively discussed in terms of the extent of religious discrimination in Northern Ireland, are occupational recruitment practices which explicitly or implicitly favour members of one group over the other. Again the actual extent of such practices cannot be gauged, but among examples which have been noted are a number of large firms in Northern Ireland which notoriously employ few Roman Catholics and instances during the Stormont period when local government appointments have reflected the political and religious coloration of the controlling group on the local council. (For a summary, see Darby, 1976, 70-73, 146-51.)

In other cases religiously homogeneous workforces may come into being even in the absence of overt discrimination. As Easthope (1976) points out, in an economy where 45% of the working population are employed in firms having fewer than 100 workers, there is scope for the operation of particularism in the workplace. This is well seen in 'Aughnaboy', the village studied by Leyton (1975) where particularistic ties, particularly of kinship, were extremely important sources of job information and recommendation. Leyton records that many of the owners of the fishing and quarrying enterprises in Aughnaboy did have an ideology by which they attempted to minimize obligations to less fortunate and importuning kin. Often, though, employees would recommend a kinsman or friend for employment and this was usually regarded by all sides as providing a suitable basis for recruitment. Since kin, and particularly close kin, in Northern Ireland will almost always be co-religionists, informal recruitment practices therefore tend

to reproduce the existing composition of the workforce.

Quite how far - in normal times at any rate - social contexts outside the neighbourhood and the workplace are segregated must remain somewhat conjectural. It seems clear, though, that a substantial proportion of people in Northern Ireland find their friends within their own religious group. Some 78% of Protestants and 57% of the Catholics interviewed by Rose (1971, 305) said that all or most of their friends were co-religionists, while 62% of those in Jenkins and McRae's sample had over half of their friends from the same religious group as themselves.[1]

More generally, data on segregation in voluntary associations is again available in Rose (1971), and Harris (1972) has given a good account of social separation in one Northern Irish village. Rose (1971, 383) reports that 46% of his respondents were in organizations which were religiously homogeneous, although one-third also said that they belonged to voluntary associations which were 'mixed' in their membership.[2] Harris shows a pattern of social segregation in 'Ballybeg' extending through associational activities to sports and social functions. The Orange Order was an important focus for Protestant associational life from which Catholics by definition were excluded, but even where organizations were not intentionally exclusive in their religious membership joint participation remained lacking. There were, for example, few Catholics in the Farmers' Union and in the Young Farmers' Club. The two sides played different games: Gaelic sports on the Catholic side, while rugby and cricket were more popular among Protestants.

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[1]The last figure is recalculated from Table 7 of Jenkins and McRae (1967). It should be noted though that in some parts of Northern Ireland the word 'friend' "is more commonly used to designate a kinsman and 'mates' or 'chums' for non-kin friendships" (Leyton, 1975b, 95).

[2]Rose's figures also show Protestants to be twice as likely to be in voluntary associations as Catholics. This may be due to differences in class composition but probably also reflects the 32% of Rose's respondents who said they were members of the Orange Order.

Harris notes, too, how social activities in Ballybeg were frequently organized along denominational lines, a fact not entirely unconnected to the ready availability to members of each denomination of church halls, and in the Protestant case, the local Orange hall for dances, functions and, since Ballybeg had no cinema, films. As she points out, frequently underlying the use of church plant in this way was precisely a concern to minimize contacts among the young that might lead to religious exogamy.[1]

Catholic-Protestant interaction

While it is clear that the lives of many in Northern Ireland are channelled in ways which scarcely facilitate contact between members of the two religious groups, it would be an exaggeration to see Catholic-Protestant relations in Northern Ireland as being governed by a strict apartheid. Contact across the religious divide does occur. In its tenor, however, it differs markedly from interaction between co-religionists.

As Rosemary Harris has pointed out (1972, 139) "it is a matter of common observation that in every context the average Ulster-man's first reaction on joining any collection of people is to assess their religious affiliation". Such an assessment is not made overtly

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[1] A further factor here is probably a concern simply to control the sexuality of the young. Historically, at any rate, this concern has been particularly marked in Irish Catholicism. Connell (1968) suggests that Roman Catholic priests in Ireland, predominantly of peasant stock, tended to be suspicious of and uncomfortable with manifestations of sexuality. Connell produces evidence of attempts by priests to control 'company-keeping' in rural Ireland and notes that the Irish Catholic hierarchy encouraged the construction of parochial halls which would permit social affairs to be conducted under the watchful eyes of the clergy and pressured the Irish government for the introduction of legislation to license dance halls. Had these attempts been successful it is possible that Ireland might have come close to having a system of supervised courtship such as that described by Goode (1959). It is incidentally the case that Connell's comments concerning the control of company-keeping by priests suggest that courtship was a flourishing institution in Ireland by the end of the nineteenth century. This in turn suggests that arranged marriages - in which courtship does not feature - had already become less important than they had been previously (see also, McKenna, 1978).

but on the basis of certain cues[1] and the nature of the subsequent interaction is conditioned by the assessment made. Most usually, where an encounter is found to involve both Protestants and Catholics it is governed by an etiquette of demeanour[2] which makes impermissible the open disclosure of possibly contentious topics or the overt expression of 'aggressive facework' (Goffman, 1955). As Barritt and Carter (1972, 58) put it, "the prudent keep off controversial subjects; the less prudent (or those in a more intimate degree of friendship) may indulge in a friendly banter, but it will be of a kind which throughout remembers the religious difference".

It might be thought that such an arrangement would tend to produce a pattern of inter-group relations characterized by fragility, uneasiness and mutual suspicion. This is not, however, inevitably the case. In rural areas at least, the definition of the situation which governs Catholic-Protestant interaction encourages and is encouraged by the positive valuation of qualities of civility and affability in dealing with others, whether co-religionists or not, which struck both Leyton (1966) and Harris (1972) as a noticeable feature of the villages they studied. Some local communities are therefore able to maintain a considerable measure of durability, stability and harmony in Protestant-Catholic relations even where open discord is apparent elsewhere (see also Bufwack, 1975).

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[1] For an excellent and extended treatment see Burton's discussion of 'telling' (Burton, 1978, Cp.2).

[2] Van den Berghe (1960b, 1967) has argued that inter-group interaction is largely governed by etiquette where relations between the groups are based on paternalism. When individuals from different groups interact in industrial society, on the other hand, etiquette, he contends, is absent or at least not well developed. The suggestion here is that etiquettes appear in both contexts. In the paternalist case the etiquette expresses the claims of the dominant group to superiority and so might therefore be seen as an etiquette of deference. When paternalism is absent etiquette functions primarily as a conflict-avoidance mechanism which depends for its success on the maintenance of a proper demeanour. (On deference and demeanour, see Goffman, 1956, and on etiquette in intergroup relations more generally see Doyle, 1971 (1937).)

Yet because there are sets of relational ties from which out-group members are typically absent or from which they are excluded or are made unwelcome, and because these sets overlap,[1] members of each group in a divided community are provided with interactional 'back regions' (Goffman, 1958). Eidheim (1969), discussing Lapp-Norwegian relations in a Northern Norwegian coastal village, has referred to such regions as 'closed spheres of interaction' and has pointed to their function in providing an arena within which behaviour capable of being stigmatized by the out-group is permitted and where negative or hostile judgments concerning the out-group and its members may be freely aired.

The results of this dual system of public reticence and private openness are that communication within groups is facilitated and communication between them hampered. Thus, on the one hand, as Easthope points out, there is a tendency for communication within the group to be based on a shared perceptual and experiential world and on a texture of shared understandings. "There is therefore no need when communicating with a member of the same community to elaborate upon statements, to explain in detail what is the precise meaning of a phrase; in short, a restricted code of communication (Bernstein, 1973) exists in which empathic statements are frequent and circularity is a common feature of discussion" (Easthope, 1976, 435). On the other hand, a further consequence is that stereotypes[2] are fostered, since when issues are avoided it becomes difficult for them to be clarified.

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[1] By forming a 'communalism scale' from responses to his questions about the extent of religious homogeneity in various relational categories Rose was able to produce an overall measure of religious segregation in the social relationships of those in his sample. Only 10% of Catholics and 3% of Protestants in the sample had a range of relationships which were predominantly with members of the 'other' group. The overall tendency instead was for most relational ties to be with those having the same religion (Rose, 1971, 305-6).

[2] Common stereotypes in Northern Ireland might include assessments by Protestants that Catholics are lower-class, feckless, superstitious, idolatrous, priest-ridden, disloyal or untrustworthy. On the Catholic side Protestants might be seen as arrogant, uncultured, money-grubbing, repressive, intolerant or bigoted (see variously, Harris, 1972; Leyton, 1974; Moore, 1972; Barritt and Carter, 1972; O'Donnell, 1977; Burton, 1978).

This is a point nicely made by Harris (1972, 146):

> It is perhaps worth saying that in Ulster ... comments on religious differences may reach extraordinarily crude levels. For example, I have heard the matter of the participation or non-participation of the congregation in the Communion cup explained in terms of wine bibbing: Catholics saying Protestants are only Protestants because they want the chance of a drink at Communion, and Protestants asserting that the priest excludes others from taking the wine because he wants it all himself! Clearly those whose repertoire of arguments in favour of their own faith consists of statements at this kind of level cannot enter into religious debates without the immediate danger of a quarrel. If to avoid that possibility, they remain silent they never learn what it is others believe.

One can see without difficulty that interaction in the manner just described is scarcely conducive to the establishment of a close personal relationship. As Simmel (Wolf, 1950, 122-28) points out, dyadic relationships, as they persist, become suffused by a sense of uniqueness and intimacy. That is, a shared conviction arises that the content of the relationship is not to be found elsewhere and a progressive revelation of each partner's self to the other takes place. These, however, are precisely qualities which are difficult to attain where, as when Catholic and Protestant meet in Northern Ireland, the interactants must be constrained continually by the conventions of avoidance and restraint, by the need continually to monitor the interaction and by the danger that in exposing the self what will be merely made obvious is the discrepant character of the partners' respective interpretive schemae.

## The research

On the account given above interreligious marriage in Northern Ireland is likely to be statistically deviant, interactionally difficult and morally illegitimate. Yet some Catholics and Protestants

in Northern Ireland do marry across the religious divide to establish relationships which bring them, to reverse Rose's phrase, face-to-face in a back-to-back community. What of them? How many are there? What circumstances enable them to meet? How do they manage to reach marriage? What are the reactions which face them once their relationship becomes known to others, particularly to parents and kin, and how do they deal with those reactions?

In the chapter immediately following this one an account is given of the ways in which intermarriage has been treated in the sociological literature. What is revealed here is the need for an approach which would focus attention away from circumstances, very often seen as pathological, which produce in individuals a predisposition to outmarry, and towards an understanding of the ways in which heterogamous marriages are actually formed. In this chapter the notion of career is seen as a way in which it is possible fruitfully to consider marital formation, both heterogamous and homogamous. 'Mixed' marriages are seen to differ from non-mixed marriages only to the extent that as a result of the application of stigmatizing labels a couple's categorical difference impinges upon career contingencies which all couples meet in the course of developing their relationship.

What follows Chapter 2 is divided into two parts. The first part looks, in the main, at various aspects of religious intermarriage in Northern Ireland outside the experience of particular couples. An attempt is made in Chapter 4 to assess the extent and incidence of religious intermarriage in Northern Ireland and to investigate its patterns. (Chapter 5 takes a historical perspective to examine the development of Roman Catholic canon law on 'mixed' marriages, its implementation in Ireland and the effects, historical and contemporary, of that implementation.) In the last

of these four chapters (Chapter 6) data on the pre-marital residential location of couples marrying in a Roman Catholic parish in Belfast are examined for clues relating to the effect of residential religious segregation on patterns of marital choice.

The second part of the thesis, beginning at Chapter 7, deals with the experiences of a sample of interreligiously married couples in Northern Ireland. In Chapter 8 the notion of career is used to explore the commission of the relationship, its progress, strategies for dealing with the couple's categorical difference and the ways in which they legitimate their relationship. Subsequent chapters explore the various attempts couples make to meet as a crucial contingency the validation of their relationship, both informally by others, especially parents, and formally by means of a marriage ceremony. Finally, some brief consideration is given to a number of aspects of the married life of Catholic-Protestant couples.

## Chapter 2 Approaches to the Study of Intermarriage

Two areas of discussion are to be found within this chapter. The first relates to the way in which intermarriage has been treated in the sociological literature. The second is an attempt to deal with some of the deficiencies of that treatment.

### The treatment of intermarriage in the sociological literature[1]

Although Weber (1968, 306, 385, 932-3) makes some reference to the topic in his writings on status and ethnic group formation, the first detailed sociological studies of intermarriage emerged in the United States in the years prior to the Second World War. These studies, and those which followed them, Barron (1951) has noted fall into three main categories. First, there are those studies which have to do with the aetiology of intermarriage: the factors social and social-psychological, which induce individuals to cross group boundaries in order to marry. Second, there are studies concerned primarily with patterns of incidence and selection: the frequency with which intermarriages occur, trends over time and regularities in group preferences for outside marriage partners. Thirdly, material can be found which examines the consequences of intermarriage in terms, for example, of marital breakdown or patterns of identification by children.

In what follows no attempt will be made to provide an exhaustive survey of the material covering these three areas. Some detailed attention will, however, be paid to the literature relating to the aetiology of intermarriage with the intention of exposing some of its underlying assumptions. While reference will be made to studies dealing with patterns of incidence and selection and the consequences of

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[1] No attempt is made here to discuss the psychoanalytic literature on intermarriage. In most cases here intermarriage is treated as a vehicle for the channelling of Oedipal impulses or conflicts away from parents (Herton, 1970) or as removing a subconscious self-hatred based on skin colour (Fanon, 1970).

intermarriage, discussion will be restricted only to those aspects of such studies which have helped to sustain the assumptions found in the aetiological literature.

The literature on the aetiology of intermarriage is varied and extensive. To a very large degree, however, much of what has been written appears to have been based implicitly on the model of inter-group relations in the United States which Gordon (1961) has referred to as 'structural pluralism'. Most systematically developed in Gordon's work the origins of this model are to be found in Kennedy's studies of marriage patterns in New Haven, Connecticut (Kennedy, 1944, 1952). Kennedy's New Haven studies undermined the assumption that assimilation was inevitable and that the United States was a 'melting pot' within which were to be blended the nation's diverse races, creeds and nationalities and out of which would arise a new American race. Examining patterns of intermarriage in New Haven from 1870 to 1940, Kennedy found that over the 70-year period racial boundaries in New Haven had only rarely been breached by marriages between Blacks and Whites. Marriages between differing nationality groups had increased in line with the melting-pot hypothesis but only to the extent that religious boundaries were not crossed. "The increasing intermarriage in New Haven", Kennedy wrote,

> is not general and indiscriminate but is channelled by religious barriers; and groups with the same religion tend to intermarry. Thus Irish, Italians and Poles intermarry mostly among themselves, and British, Germans and Scandinavians do likewise, while Jews seldom marry Gentiles (Kennedy, 1944, 339).

If there was a melting pot in New Haven, Kennedy concluded it was a 'triple melting pot' and not a single melting pot.

From Kennedy's work later writers, and especially Gordon (1961; 1964) took the assumption that, while acculturation had been

extensive among the various ethnic and religious groups in the United States, barriers to assimilation in primary relations remained substantial, relatively permanent and immutable.[1] While such a model in its entirety can only with difficulty be applied to the situation of Blacks in the United States, most writers on racial intermarriage in the U.S. have characterized Black-White relations as being caste-like in nature. In so doing an assumption similar to that of structural-pluralism theorists is made about the closed and bounded character of primary in-group ties.

Intermarriage viewed from the perspective of the structural pluralism or caste models of inter-group relations becomes inevitably equated with the breaching of significant social boundaries. Explanations of the causes of intermarriage have therefore tended to focus on those conditions which permit the normative or relational ties of an individual to his or her own social group to become ruptured, attenuated or ineffective.

One source of a tendency to intermarry has thus been seen to lie in the absence of normative constraints brought about by social disorganization or anomie. Merton (1941) and Slotkin (1942) have both, for example, employed typological formulations in which are delineated social types whose tendency to enter intermarriage is said to derive from a generalized absence of normative constraint. In Merton's view, for example, marriages between lower-class Blacks and lower-class Whites are manifestations of the retreatism typical of those on the fringes of social life. These marriages occur, he argues, among the pariahs of society and those he terms 'cultural aliens' as a consequence of their inability "to gear into the social structure and achieve 'respectable' status" (Merton, 1941). Slotkin in a study of

[1] For an interesting critique see Alba (1976). Alba argues that the extent of marital assimilation in the United States among white ethnic groups has been routinely underestimated because standard coding procedures have led to a systematic undercounting.

Jewish-Gentile intermarriage in Chicago makes reference to those who are 'unorganized' or 'demoralized', criminal and delinquent elements whose proneness to intermarriage derives from the breakdown of the urban community. As Slotkin puts it (1942, 35),

> The disorganization in deteriorated areas of the city produces people who do not conform to the customs of the culture at large, and who constitute the bulk of juvenile delinquents and adult law-breakers - the underworld. As in other aspects of the customs of their group, they are not often restrained by ethnic prejudices; consequently, promiscuity and liaisons between such peoples of different groups occur, and in some cases lead to marriage, particularly when the woman becomes pregnant.

In a much more recent study, Bescanceney (1970) has attributed variations in the incidence of religious intermarriage in Detroit to a variety of 'anomic situations'. He enumerates five situations of this kind: war, remaining single when a majority of one's peers have married, rural-urban migration, educational mobility and rapid social mobility. All of these he sees as inducing anomia, a condition Bescanceney equates with a general state of normlessness (as opposed for example to a disjunction between cultural goals and means) and which renders ineffective endogamous religious norms.

Rather more frequently favourable orientations towards marriage with an out-group member have been seen to arise out of an individual's attempt to distance him- or herself from in-group ties either as a consequence of estrangement or emancipation. A relationship between intermarriage and the shedding of primary group ties through conflict with parents has been noted both by Heiss (1960) and by Freeman (1955). Heiss found that compared to those who had entered intrafaith marriages the religiously intermarried in his sample were more likely to report dissatisfaction with parents when young, greater early family strife, less early family integration and a greater degree

of emancipation from parents at the time of marriage. Freeman (1955), in a very interesting article, also points to the role of estrangement from parents in a study of inter-ethnic marriages in Hawaii. Among the intermarried, he found, conflict with parents, and later with peers, had produced a generalized rejection of the in-group in adolescence. Out-group members became idealized by contrast and a search commenced for a marriage partner from within their ranks. Frequently selected through this process, according to Freeman, were those who had undergone a similar process with respect to their own groups and who were likewise seeking an out-group marriage partner.

Consistently, those who have become 'emancipated' from the social group of their upbringing have also been mentioned by researchers as having a predeliction towards intermarriage. (Merton, 1941; Slotkin, 1942; Levinson and Levinson, 1958; Golden, 1959; Cottrell, 1971; Wolf, 1971). As described in the literature emancipation appears to be a process which involves the principled rejection of in-group norms and values, especially where these are perceived to be narrow, sectional or inward-looking. Substituted for that which is discarded is a fresh world-view typically based around what the Levinsons have described as a 'desegregating, anti-ethnocentric orientation' (Levinson and Levinson, 1958, 125), permitting on the one hand, no display of antipathy towards out-group members but allowing, on the other, a positive evaluation of 'mixed' relationships.

Although it is not always spelt out in detail, the emancipated are usually discussed in a way which suggests them to be relatively high in socio-economic status, cosmopolitan and politically radical. Merton in his (1941) article argues, for example, that middle-class Blacks and middle-class Whites marrying in the United States are most

likely to be "'emancipated' persons, so-called radicals who ... enjoy eminently satisfactory status as judged by conventional standards but have become alienated from the values, institutional ideologies and organization of the caste system". A substantial proportion of those involved in the Indian-Western marriages studied by Cottrell (1971) were in executive or professional occupations as were most of the Levinsons' (1958) Jewish respondents, though in this case the majority had been socially mobile. The link with political radicalism is noted by several writers (though it has usually been expressed in a rather less dismissive tone than that used by Merton). Golden (1959) has noted, for example, that the U.S. Communist Party has been notable for the extent of interracial marriages found within its ranks and more especially among its leaders, while Wolf, a sociologically informed insider, has observed that among those involved in the civil-rights and anti-Vietnam-war movement "interracial relationships were very natural, common, and valued positively" (Wolf, 1971, 59).

Finally, some writers have seen the desire to obtain an instrumental gain from association with an out-group member as constituting a 'pull' factor against which normative constraints may be relatively ineffective. Slotkin (1942), Mayer (1961), Levinson and Levinson (1958) and Harre (1966) all point to situations where out-group members are sought out as sources of sexual gratification free from the potential for entanglement that might be associated with an in-group partner. Marriages occur in such situations either because an affectional relationship eventually develops or through the woman becoming pregnant.

More importantly, it has been proposed that in some cases intermarriage may provide both partners with mutual gain. Specifically,

both Davis (1941) and Merton (1941) have suggested in articles published in the same year that an individual may trade high or low ascribed status against high or low achieved status. Thus, Merton argues that in the United States one would expect interracial marriages to follow a hypogamous pattern with lower-class White women most frequently marrying higher-class Black men. This is for Merton "a reciprocal compensatory situation in which the Negro male 'exchanges' his higher economic position for the white female's higher caste status".

Through adherence to an underlying model of intergroup relations which focuses attention primarily on the dislocation of normative or relational ties as favourable conditions for out-marriage, writers on the aetiology of intermarriage have tended to build into their work two basic assumptions. Firstly, it can be argued, they have frequently developed an underlying tendency to identify intermarriage as arising out of pathological circumstances. Secondly, one can also find embodied in the literature what Cohen (1965) refers to as an 'assumption of discontinuity'. Analysis, in other words, is couched primarily "in terms of variables that describe initial states, on the one hand, and outcomes, on the other, rather than in terms of processes whereby acts and complex structures of action are built, elaborated and transformed" (Cohen, 1965, 9). A further point that can be made is that those strands of the literature on intermarriage not connected with its aetiology have actually contributed to a received wisdom which has allowed both of these assumptions to remain unchallenged.

The assumption of pathology

It is not difficult to conclude that a pathologizing tendency exists in the literature on intermarriage. One need only look at the catalogue of social types which the literature depicts as being prone

to out-marry; these include the slum-dweller, the sexual adventurer, the young person unable to relate to his parents, the individual whose peers have married leaving him single and the radical who has cast off the prejudices of the conventional world. One can also note in a number of instances a preference for setting aside, sometimes in an almost inexplicable manner, explanations for intermarriage which do not invoke extreme situations, personal inadequacy or deficient socialization. This is notably and interestingly so, for example, in Merton's (1941) article on 'Intermarriage and the Social Structure'.[1]

Merton's remarks on the cultural alien and those who have rejected the dominant values underlying the structure of race relations in the United States in that work draw quite obviously on the discussions of 'retreatism' and 'rebellion' contained in his celebrated article on 'social structure and anomie' (Merton, 1938). In that article retreatism and rebellion were treated as specific modes of adaptation to the strains generated by the disjuction between culturally approved goals (with a particular emphasis on the success goal in American society) and the availability of legitimate means for attaining them.

There are, it is true, difficulties about applying the concepts of retreatism and rebellion directly to the study of intermarriage. For example, retreatism as described in 'Social Structure and Anomie' is a privatized, individualistic response characterized by defeatism, quietism and resignation. Retreatists typically include among their number, according to Merton, "vagrants, vagabonds, tramps, chronic alcoholics and drug addicts". If this is so, it is difficult to see then why retreatism should lead to marriage at all, much less intermarriage. The important point, however, is that when Merton used these concepts in 'Social Structure and Anomie' he was concerned to undermine what he

[1]This is admittedly an early article and one which is much less well known than some of Merton's other writings. It does though represent an attempt, in some ways still unsurpassed, to develop a systematic theoretical approach to the study of intermarriage, and it remains an article still much cited in the literature on intermarriage.

saw as an unacceptable equation of deviation and psychological abnormality prevalent in the literature of the time. As a result he was very clear about two things. The types of response he had described were not to be taken as forms of personality organization and, as a corollary to this, the assumption was not to be made that the mode of adaptation found in one sphere of an individual's life was to be found in any other sphere.

In 'Intermarriage and Social Structure' published three years later, however, Merton retreats from both these positions without any real indication of why he is doing so. Non-conforming behaviour is now seen as "simply a special case of the larger repudiation of cultural goals and means" (1941, 371) and there is a strong implication that retreatism and rebellion are now to be taken as personality types (1941, 372, n.37). What Merton seems now to be saying is that a turning away from the goal of success, either through repeated failure to attain it, as in the retreatist mode, or through its principled rejection, as in rebellion, leads to a generalized rejection of goals and means which extends for the individual across a variety of roles. In this way, it is implied, malintegrated individuals are produced for whom normative proscriptions mean little and who, as a result, are likely to find their way into intermarriage.

The theory of deviant behaviour Merton had proposed in 'Social Structure and Anomie' was, as Taylor, Walton and Young (1973) have pointed out, a "radically sociological" one. In it, the origins of non-conforming behaviour were taken to lie other than in the "failure of an organic society properly to inculcate its values (leaving the field open for the free play of pathological and egoistic desires). Merton intends his typology to depict the actions of men making meaningful choices, accepting or rejecting cultural goals, accepting or

rejecting institutionalized means" (Taylor, Walton and Young, 1973, 96). Such is not the case however in 'Intermarriage and Social Structure'. By making entry into intermarriage dependent on a generalized repudiation of cultural goals and means linked to deficient personality organization, out-marriage is seen inevitably to be the product of pathology. The repudiation of cultural goals and means attains, in Mawson's words, "the status of a disease entity" (1970, 299). Entry into intermarriage is caught from a pre-existing pathological condition.

A comparable insistence on retaining a rather negative view of the conditions favouring intermarriage can be seen in Bescanceney's (1970) work. Here there is a marked unwillingness to attribute increases in the rate of religious intermarriage to anything which might point to a positive evaluation of mixed relationships. Bescanceney concedes that in a plural society the religious values which encourage endogamy may be in competition with values of individualism, romanticism and secularism (1970, 125). However, he gives no reason for preferring his assertion that increases in intermarriage rates are the product of anomic situations over these alternative possibilities.

This might have been less alarming had Bescanceney not then resolutely refused to falsify his hypotheses. He finds, for example, a statistically significant relationship between intermarriage and social mobility only for Catholics but not for Protestants. The hypotheses relating intermarriage to war, late marriage and to rural-urban migration remain unsupported by his data, while too few cases were available to permit an anlysis of the effects of educational mobility. Faced with this material, but apparently unable to conceive of intermarriage as anything other than a product of extreme situations, Bescanceney simply turns to other published studies for support.

The inability to seek the causes of intermarriage in anything other than the pathological revealed by an inspection of the literature produces two difficulties. In the first place, it should be clear that in assuming the origins of intermarriage to lie in pathological circumstances and conditions, sociological treatments do not stray far from the usually negative conceptions of the topic found among those, such as religious functionaries, who have a vested interest in the maintenance of boundaries (see, for example, Vincent, 1959). As David Matza (1969) has pointed out historically in sociology even a tacit alignment between sociologists and the guardians of moral probity has usually encouraged the exclusion or devaluation of the perspectives and experiences of those judged to have morally transgressed. In consequence, as is true in the case of intermarriage, the voices of those who form the subject of investigation are only fitfully heard.

Secondly, and more specifically, from the literature which associates intermarriage with the pathological one gains only a sense of the radical discontinuities which exist between heterogamous and homogamous marriages. Obviously, though, both kinds of marriage must share features in common which may be relevant to the understanding of what makes them different. The literature unfortunately provides no basis for discerning what these features might be.

The assumption of discontinuity

Looked at closely it is apparent that the literature on the aetiology of intermarriage strictly speaking does not deal with factors producing intermarriage per se. Rather, by focussing on 'emancipation', 'rebellion', a desire for instrumental gain, and so on, its primary concern is with the conditions which predispose individuals towards out-marriage. It is from this concern that the assumption of discontinuity to be found in the literature derives. No thought is given in

these studies to the ways in which predisposed individuals move towards marriage. The assumption seems simply to be that prior orientation and ultimate choice are synonymous. Given the initial predisposition, marriage to an out-group member is seen to follow automatically.

Giving no thought to the reaching of marriage produces treatments of intermarriage which, it can be argued, tend towards negativity, impose on relationships a definitional homogenization and abstract intermarrying pairs from their social environment. The first of these tendencies is well seen in studies which stress the role of 'emancipation' or 'estrangement' as factors in the aetiology of intermarriage. It is, in fact, sometimes useful to be able to use these terms in a descriptive manner. At the same time they frequently obscure more than they illuminate because with their use analysis quickly becomes couched in rather negative terms. Those who are emancipated or estranged are always seemingly discussed in terms of what they are not or what they do not do, the identity they do not have or their lack of a particular kind of involvement. Indeed, in the end, these couples cease in the eyes of some writers to be intermarried at all.

To the extent that the emancipated, for example, have similar class positions, share their political views and have an orientation which minimizes group divisions, it is possible to argue that the marriages they contract are 'mixed' only in a superficial sense; that in important ways these are homogamous couples. Freeman, in fact, takes this sort of position with regard to those who have become estranged from their in-group. The logic of the situation in which they find themselves, he argues, means that the estranged from one group marry the estranged from another group, producing a combination which is "ethnically heterogamous, but homogamous with reference to mode of social adjustment and psychological background" (Freeman, 1955, 376).

While this may well be so, nevertheless, the question of what actually sustains the relationship in a positive rather than a negative manner is never raised. One is not permitted to gain a sense of process in the relationship by asking how couples actually maintain the non-relevance of their putatively different backgrounds. It is difficult to see how their self-images are maintained or how far they do perceive themselves to be marginal.

What can be described as a tendency towards definitional homogenization arises in these studies from the tacit assumption that whatever leads an individual to countenance out-marriage imposes a dominant definition on the relationship. Merton's (1941) work again provides an example here, but this time in relation to the 'compensation' hypothesis put forward independently by Merton and Kingsley Davis (1941). As Merton clearly recognizes a difficulty with the theory that Black-White marriages in the United States involve a "reciprocal compensatory situation" arises out of the prescription found in American culture that marriage has a predominantly affectual basis. That is, in the United States (as in Western societies generally) a concern for the instrumental gains to be derived from marriage is permitted a much less dominant and certainly less legitimate place than would be true, say, for the Indian situation which provided Davis and Merton with their original model for the compensation hypothesis. Having recognized the problem, however, the interesting and obvious question of how potentially competing definitions of the relationship are handled by the partners is never asked. Instead Merton deals with the problem in an unsatisfactory manner, brushing it aside with the assertion that the partners' "psychic reaction is manifestly structured by the social organization" (1941, 3730) and by saying that "... the theory of social structure complements the theory of personal interaction; from a functional standpoint,

regularities in the two spheres are mutually implicative" (1941, 361). Just what the mutual implications between the two spheres might be and the way in which they might be worked out in practice are never spelt out.

Finally, the aetiological literature suggests that, in relation to intermarriage, the social environment only has one function: the production of a predisposition to out-marry. As Robert Lewis (1973b, 410) has remarked, however, "dyads do not form in a social vacuum". It therefore becomes appropriate to ask how far social audiences have an effect on the translation of predisposition into marital choice or on the new social unit formed after choice is made. As long as the relationship between those who intermarry and their wider social world is seen as operating in only one direction, this remains impossible.

## The unquestioned acceptance of assumptions of pathology and discontinuity

Before going on to an attempt to set out an alternative way of looking at intermarriage which, hopefully, will avoid some of the problems outlined above, it is useful to consider how it has been possible for the existing approach, with its assumptions of pathology and discontinuity, to remain unchallenged. It seems as if two things have been important here. The first is the way in which strands of the literature on intermarriage unconnected to the material on aetiology have encouraged a 'structured disinterest' in the formation of heterogamous marriages among writers specifically interested in courtship. The second is that a generally negative view of intermarriage has been propagated through an undue emphasis which has been placed on the supposedly dysfunctional consequences of heterogamy.

Those specifically interested in marital formation have had very little to say about relationships formed by those coming from

putatively different backgrounds. As a result studies of the ways in which heterogamous marriages are actually formed prove to be quite uncommon. The major studies appear only to be those by Mayer (1961) on Jewish-Gentile courtship and by Harré (1966) who gives a largely descriptive account of Maori-Pakeha (White) relationships in New Zealand.[1]

In part one can attribute some of this neglect to specific features of the literature on courtship. It is clear, for example, that many studies in this area simply have a rather limited focus. Often in response to the somewhat critical view of courtship expressed by Waller (1938) much of the available material concerns itself with the correlates of factors in courtship such as empathy, romanticism and idealization (see, for example, Hobart, 1956; Kirkpatrick and Hobart, 1954; Vernon and Steward, 1957). Further, a great many of the studies devoted to courtship found in the literature are based on samples of undergraduate students in American universities and colleges - on populations, in other words, which tend in any case to be relatively homogeneous. Besides this, however, one can also locate a disinterest in the topic of 'mixed' relationships which is structured by a particular interpretation of the New Haven studies mentioned earlier.

It will be remembered that Kennedy had described marriage patterns in New Haven as forming a 'triple melting pot'. Bescanceney (1970, 34) notes that Kennedy's findings had been anticipated by a number of other writers but that it was her conceptualization of the pattern she found which proved to be influential. A significant feature of that conceptualization was its stress on the multi-dimensional character of marital choice and continuing pervasiveness of homogamous marriage, themes which were taken up again some years

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[1] Mayer's extremely valuable study is narrowed in its focus somewhat by a concentration on relationships in which the Jewish partner had been initially reluctant even to countenance marriage with a Gentile.

after Kennedy's initial study was published when Hollingshead looked again at marriage patterns in New Haven (Hollingshead, 1950). Basing his findings on a sample survey of couples married in the city in 1948 Hollingshead reaffirmed the existence of the triple-melting-pot pattern. However, he also went further than Kennedy to assert that normative pressures substantially and simultaneously constrain mate choice in a way which ensures that marrying pairs are similar across a whole range of social and cultural characteristics.

A number of writers have argued that the patterns found by Kennedy and Hollingshead in New Haven were far from being typical for the United States as a whole especially with respect to religious intermarriage. Thomas (1951) has claimed, for instance, that the low rate of out-marriage for Catholics found by Hollingshead in New Haven is unconvincing when set against Catholic ecclesiastical statistics for the State of Connecticut as a whole which show substantial proportions of the marriages taking place there in 1949 to have involved non-Catholic partners. Locke et al make a similar case using both Catholic diocesan statistics for the United States as a whole and Canadian official statistics. In both countries they show that wide variations exist in rates of intermarriage for Catholics and that the proportion of Catholic-non-Catholic marriages varies directly and inversely with the proportion of Catholics in the population. (A similar pattern for Jews has also been described by Rosenthal (1967).) In other words, where a particular group's numbers are small and the availability of in-group partners is low, intermarriage rates tend to be relatively high.

This material, however, has not deterred a number of writers (Winch, 1958; Reiss, 1960; Lewis, 1969, 1973; Berger and Kellner, 1964) who have attempted specifically to look at processes in courtship

from interpreting Hollingshead's evidence, in particular, to suggest that courtships proceed from a context in which the field of eligibles, to use Winch's phrase, has already been narrowed to include only those similar in their values and their social characteristics.

This view that courtship relations typically originate within a field restricted to those of like characteristics has attained something of the status of an orthodoxy within the literature on courtship. As Kerckhoff (1963) points out, though, there are two major difficulties associated with it. The first is that in using data about those who are married to say something about the conditions under which courtship takes place, the proponents of this view are attempting, illegitimately, to infer process from outcome. The second problem is that there is an ambiguity about the factors which cause the field of eligibles to be narrowed. Although this may occur through the operation of normative constraints, the nature of the field of potential spouses may also reflect patterns of opportunity. The studies which suggest that New Haven may not be entirely representative indicate that under certain conditions at least partners having dissimilar backgrounds may become available to each other. In choosing to ignore this possibility the potential for an understanding of how those who do have dissimilar backgrounds proceed through courtship to marriage has been systematically undermined.

Just as it is possible for the assumption of discontinuity in the literature on intermarriage to be sustained by a particular interpretation of the New Haven studies, so the assumption of pathology is buttressed by a particular reading of that literature which explores the relationship between intermarriage and marital breakdown. A persistent theme in this literature, especially as it related to religious

intermarriage, is that heterogamous mate choice brings with it an increased risk of marital breakdown, on the assumption that partners from different backgrounds bring to their marriage potentially conflicting values which may lead them to irresolvable conflict.

Focussing specifically on the relationship between religious intermarriage and marital stability, at least as reflected in divorce rates, it is useful to distinguish a trio of early studies, all of which appeared prior to 1950, from those which have been published subsequently. The early studies are those by Bell (1938), Weeks (1943) and Landis (1949). In each case a similar method of investigation was used, with school children and college students being asked to provide data on their parents' marriages. The studies, therefore, rely on second-hand data, reflect the experiences of those marriages in which there have been children, and may be subject to bias deriving from the socio-economic characteristics of the study populations.

Similar results emerge from all three studies. Students who reported that their parents were religiously intermarried were also more likely to report them as having been divorced. In the most widely cited study, that by Landis (1949), for example, 4% of marriages in which both parents were Catholic and 6% of marriages in which both parents were Protestant were reported to have ended in divorce against 14% of marriages which were religiously mixed.

The evidence from the later studies is contradictory. Bumpass and Sweet (1972) have found differentials in marital stability like those found in the earlier studies. On the other hand, research carried out using record-linkage techniques in the two states in the U.S.A. which record religious affiliation on their marriage registration forms suggest the relationship between religious intermarriage and divorce

to be rather less strong. Burchinall and Chancellor (1963) found survival rates for intermarriages in Iowa to be only somewhat lower than for religiously homogamous marriages, and when controls were introduced for age of wife and status level of husband, the survival rate differences were considerably reduced. In a similar study in Indiana (Christensen and Barber, 1967) divorce was only very slightly more likely to have been an outcome in cases where the marriage had been religiously mixed than was so for religiously homogamous marriages.

Unlike the later studies one object of the earlier work was to provide a realistic assessment of the chances of success faced by those entering an interreligious marriage. Such an assessment could then be used as a basis for counselling or for courses in marriage preparation. Landis records, for example (Landis, 1949, 401), that it was precisely a desire to produce a basis for counselling students who came to him for advice about entering an interreligious marriage which served as a motivation for his research. Vernon (1960) has noted that an implicit bias against intermarriage is reflected in these studies by their use of dissolution rates for different kinds of marriages rather than survival rates which would have shown that the majority of marriages remain intact whatever their religious composition.

The desire to place marriage guidance and counselling on a seemingly objective and scientific basis hides, however, an additional source of unconscious and conservative bias. The writers of the day who commended to those engaged in mate-selection a more 'realistic' approach based on an appreciation of the factors which research had shown to be predictive of marital stability did so with a polemical intent. They sought specifically to undermine the influence of the romantic-love complex (Goode, 1959). In their view, by introducing into marital choice elements of excessive individualism, emotionalism

and idealization, romantic love served as a poor basis for marriage.

Kolb (1950) has argued that this identification of romanticism with individualism and emotionalism is a mistaken one. The outcome of the critique of romantic love proposed by the 'scientific matchmakers', he suggests, is to encourage the assessment of potential marriage partners by those seeking mates not in terms of individual qualities but rather in terms of social attributes such as status, income, race and religion. In so doing, he argues (Kolb, 1948, 1950), the writers display a value orientation consistent with the mate-selection norms typical of the American middle-class and reveal an implicit hostility to marriages which are non-conformist or unconventional.

The impact of those studies based on the implicit value premise which Kolb describes has been much greater than that of the later and methodologically more sophisticated studies which appeared later on and which produced less clear-cut results. As Spanier and Strump (1978) point out, the early studies have been differentially disseminated for didactic purposes, in that they overwhelmingly form the basis for text-book generalizations about the relationship between 'mixed' marriages and marital dissolution. It is possible to conclude from this that the received wisdom in sociology on the effects of heterogamous marriage is of a kind consistent with the identification of intermarriage and pathology.

Mate-selection in an open marriage system

It has been argued that existing theories relating to the aetiology of intermarriage are based on a model of intergroup relations which makes the central task of explanation the delineation of factors which lead to the disruption of an individual's ties to his or her own social group. The contention was, however, that such a model produced

a tendency for theories of intermarriage to embody assumptions of pathology and discontinuity associated with which were a number of specific problems. The starting point for the present study is rather different. What is proposed here is that intermarriage should be seen in a wider context which takes cognisance of the fact that mate-selection in Western industrial societies is 'open' rather than 'closed' (Jacobson and Matheny, 1962).

In a closed marriage system marital choice is in the hands of parents or the wider kin group. This is because in such a system marriage is tied to the transference of productive property. In this case the interest of the wider domestic group in the satisfactory disposal of such property is typically assured through the concentration of control over the finding and selection of potential spouses in the hands of parents (who may often be aided by agents such as matchmakers). While the wishes of the spouse-candidates themselves may act as a constraint on the final choice of a mate, they are of secondary importance to the striking of a marriage bargain of mutual satisfaction to both sets of parents. The information about the parties necessary to the striking of such a bargain is of a public and impersonal kind germane to the match rather than to those matched,[1] and the cycle of recruitment, selection and the presentation of the potential spouses to each other need take no longer in a particular case than is necessary to agree on mutually acceptable terms to the marriage bargain.

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[1] In rural Ireland, as Arensberg (1937) was told, the 'speaker' or marital go-between would be asked by the father of an eligible about the 'fortune' attached to a particular spouse-candidate. "He asks him the place of how many cows, sheep and horses is it? He asks what makings of a garden are in it; is there plenty of water or spring wells? Is it far in from the road or on it? What kind of house is in it, slate or thatch? Are the cabins good, slate or thatch? If it is too far in from the road he won't take it. Backward places don't grow big fortunes. And he asks, too, is it near a chapel and the school or near town" (Arensberg, 1937, 78). (For a useful, more general account of the inter-relationship between economic and family life in pre-industrial societies, see Anderson (1979.)

Rather more typical of industrial societies is what Jacobson and Matheny (1962) call an 'open marriage system'. What is formed by marriage in an industrial society is not usually a new or extended productive household unit but a new nuclear family which is structually isolated in the sense of taking primacy over other kinship units as a site for the expression of obligation and affective devotion (Parsons, 1943).[1] The bases of solidarity in this new social unit are predominantly affectual and are seen to arise out of interpersonal attraction and compatibility between the potential spouses.[2] Much of the information necessary for judgments to be made about the suitability of a spouse-candidate and the potential existence of the bases of solidarity just described resides intrapersonally and is capable of discernment only through prolonged interaction. This, and the necessity for preparing economically for the establishment of the new nuclear family unit, mean that marriage is usually preceded by an institutionalized transition period of courtship.

In the absence of matchmakers and the like the recruitment of possible mates is governed in an open marriage system indirectly by the way in which general mechanisms of what Parkin (1974) has called 'social closure' limit the availability of potential spouses. A dimished role exists too for parents since, as Parsons (1943) points out, parental choice, if not parental preference, is incompatible with the autonomy and primacy which are to be claimed for the newly formed nuclear family unit. In any case parents usually lack the power of command over economic resources in an industrial society which would permit them to enforce their wishes. While parents may seek to

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[1] The extent to which the nuclear family can be said to be isolated in industrial societies has been, of course, a major point of contention between Parsons and his critics (Sussman, 1959, Litwak, 1960). As Harris (1969) usefully points out, however, Parsons is not saying that the nuclear family is not linked to the wider kinship network but that such links are not seen as taking precedence over those within the nuclear family.

[2] As Hart (1976) points out, this arrangement is powerfully buttressed in Western societies by the media's extolling of romantic love and its treatment of the nuclear family as the modal form of domestic organization.

increase the effectiveness of mechanisms of social closure by informal means (Sussman, 1953), their role is more generally a reactive one, restricted to the expression of approval or disapproval of a presented spouse-candidate.

Put more briefly, marriage in an open marriage system depends not so much on the striking of a marriage bargain but on the establishment of a marriageable relationship (Bolton, 1961). The formation of such a relationship, it can be argued, is structured by the nature of the open marriage system itself and is faced by couples as a career.

Courtship as a career

Borrowed from the study of occupations and broadened somewhat, the notion of career has proved itself useful to sociologists, notably in the field of deviance (see, for example, Becker, 1963). The term has taken on a number of meanings (Stebbins, 1970) but is used here in the sense proposed by Lemert (1967, 51) to refer to "the recurrent or typical contingencies awaiting someone who continues in a course of action".

The notion of courtship as a set of contingencies which lie before couples who desire to reach marriage is one that has been implicit in a number of accounts of pre-marital dyadic formation. The Rapoports (R. Rapoport, 1964; R. Rapoport and R. Rapoport, 1965), for example, have viewed courtship as structured around a set of 'developmental tasks' which couples must meet and with which they must contend for marriage to ensue. In a similar way, Lewis (1969, 1973) has developed a model of pre-marital dyadic formation in which continuance in a relationship depends on the partners' success in coping with a sequence of interpersonal 'pair processes'. While

points of convergence do exist within this work, there is strikingly, however, relatively little agreement on just what are the salient features involved in a couple's progress through courtship nor is it often clear what constitutes grounds for the inclusion or exclusion of a particular task or process. It is suggested here that those contingencies which are of most importance in courtship are those which derive directly from the openness of the marriage field and the freedom of choice permitted to an individual in an open marriage system. These are initiation, establishment, self-disclosure and validation.

Initiation The formation of a new nuclear family unit flows in the first instance from the establishment of recurrent interaction between the potential mates. The field of choice available to an individual, though by no means completely open, may nevertheless be quite extensive. One consequence of this is that the amount of information available to others about that individual may well be limited or dependent on visual or relatively superficial cues. The risks of an initial encounter being terminated in such a situation solely on the basis of such impressions become high. Therefore, unless those concerned have a pre-existing associational involvement which they share they must find the means to sustain their interaction beyond the initial encounter.

Establishment A further consequence of the choice available to individuals in an open marriage system and the existence - in theory at least - of a pool of alternative age-mates is that the subsequent development of the nascent social unit formed by recurrent interaction depends on the success partners have in strengthening the bonds between them while ensuring that such bonds are not being formed elsewhere. The processes of bounding and bonding which arise here are accomplished both through commitment and through exchange. Partners must ensure the first by aligning their present and future activities to facilitate

the preferential inclusion of each other and the exclusion of potential alternative partners. Further, as the relationship proceeds the partners must be able to assure themselves that the balance of rewards and costs accruing from the interaction is more favourable than that which may be obtained from an alternative source.

Self-disclosure The importance attached to nuclear family ties in societies where the mate-selection system is open means that marriage is thought of as a major source of stability and self-fulfilment in adult life. In consequence, the necessity exists for ensuring in advance that compatibility and mutual adjustment will be found (Goode, 1959; Kellner, 1966; McCall, 1966; Hart, 1976). As Berger and Kellner (1964) point out, however, in such societies those who come together in courtship are overy often 'strangers' in the Schutzian sense (Schutz, 1944). They typically come, in other words, from differing face-to-face contexts and with different "sedimented stocks of experience". Progress in the relationship, therefore, becomes at least partly contingent on the partners' ability to use the transitional phase provided by courtship as a means of disclosing to one another biographical information, images of self, attitudes, values, interests and sentiments, projections of the future and so on which may then serve as a basis for evolving assessments of personality, compatibility and the likelihood of marital adjustment (see, for example, Reiss, 1960; Lewis, 1969; Murstein, 1976).

Validation Since an individual may enter many potentially marriageable relationships with no guarantee as to their eventual outcome there is, in the first instance at least, little basis for an immediate or automatic claim for the dyad to be treated as a distinct social unit either by the participants or by those around them. Couples, therefore, face

as a further contingency the establishment of such a claim.

Contingencies are not, of course, met in any kind of mechanical manner but rather are dealt with through interaction and interpersonal negotiation. In the end result, in other words, marriage is only eventually reached at the end, as Bolton (1961, 235-6) puts it well,

> ... of a sequence of interactions characterized by advances and retreats along the paths of available alternatives, by definitions of the situation which crystallize tentative commitments and bar withdrawals from certain positions, by the sometimes tolerance and sometimes resolution of ambiguity, by reassessments of self and other, and by the tension between open-endedness and closure that characterizes all human relationships which have not been reduced to ritual.

It is important also to note that, successfully attained, initiation, establishment, self-disclosure and validation represent the outcomes of a series of processes at work in a relationship rather than its phases. The meeting of contingencies in courtship is therefore not being identified with a set of discrete stages through which couples must pass on their way from meeting to marriage. Although obviously a relationship will need to be initiated before it can proceed, it is assumed that contingencies can be met concurrently, recurrently, and that it is possible for them to be mutually contingent.

Beyond this, it should be fairly obvious that one point being made here with respect to the study of intermarriage is that, in their formation, heterogamous marriages have much in common with those where partners do not differ in their social backgrounds. This in turn gives rise to the supposition that much of the business of courtship will relate only tangentially to any difference in categorical status which may exist between the partners. Furthermore, it is not unlikely that, even where the difference in categorical status is relevant in some way, that difference will be handled as part of the routine

business of negotiation leading to the meeting of contingencies.

Against this the suggestion can be made that one important element which distinguishes 'mixed' courtships from those which are not mixed is the degree to which partners may find it necessary to deal with the potential or actual application of stigmatizing labels. Such labels can arise in courtship in two ways. On the one hand, self-disclosure may lead to the revelation of potentially discrediting information, while, on the other, those from whom validation is sought may actually choose instead to define the relationship as deviant. Depending on the circumstances, these are possibilities, of course, which may face any courtship pair whatever the differences or similarities in their social backgrounds. The need to cope with stigmatizing definitions, however, is presumably greater where differences in social background are associated with socially organized patterns of openness and secrecy of the kind previously referred to as 'closed spheres of interaction' (Eidheim, 1969), or where the social acceptability of marriage between individuals who differ in terms of some important categorical status is low.

A concern for the understanding of the impact of stigmatizing labels has in recent years formed an important preoccupation of sociologists employed in the study of non-conventional behaviour. The potential heuristic value of this approach to the study of intermarriage has not apparently, though, previously been recognized. In part, once again, one might attribute this to the character of the existing literature on intermarriage as already described. It is also clear, however, that not all strands of what has become known as 'labelling theory', and especially perhaps that which is most visible, are of equal utility to the understanding of the formation of heterogamous

marriages.

Labelling theory

Labelling or societal reaction theory emerged in the 1960s to extend and revitalize the sociology of deviance. There is, it is true, a sense in which the term 'theory' is misleading. It gives an air of coherence, systematization and consistency to what might more properly be seen as a tradition organized in a relatively loose way around a canon of writings by Becker, Lemert, Kitsuse, Erikson, Schur, Matza and others. (On the ritual citing of the works which form the canon, see Rains, 1976.) However, despite in some cases considerable differences between them on other issues (Plummer, 1979), the basic article of faith which these writers share is that deviance is most adequately to be conceptualized as the outcome of a transactional relationship between actor and social audience as a result of which a stigmatizing label marking off the individual as a rule-breaker comes to be applied. Or, as Becker (1963, 9) puts it, in his by now classic and much-quoted statement of the labelling position,

> ... deviance is not a quality of the act the person commits, but rather a consequence of the application by others of rules and sanctions to an "offender". The deviant is one to whom that label has successfully been applied; deviant behavior that people so label.

Implicit in this conception is a notion of what Becker (1963, Cp.8) has called 'moral enterprise'. Moral enterprise has two aspects: rule creation and rule enforcement. To take the first of these labelling theorists argue that rules and labels rarely emerge in an adventitious manner. Rather someone - a moral entrepreneur in Becker's terms - feels a situation to be problematic and takes the initiative for making it less so by drawing attention to it in a way which highlights its problematic nature, by mobilizing public opinion to seek a

remedy and by taking steps to put the remedy into effect.

Alongside the enterprise needed to create rules must be set the enterprise needed to enforce them. Since only under the most extreme conditions, and doubtfully even then, would it be possible to assume that those who break a rule will come inevitably to the attention of those charged with enforcing it, the application of sanctions to rule-breakers cannot be taken to occur in an unproblematic manner. Instead, sanctions come only to be applied at the end of a sequence of enforcement-directed activities. Actions, in other words, must first be identified as violations of a rule. If necessary the perpetrators must then be discovered and apprehended. This done, the label of rule-breaker needs successfully to be applied before sanctions can be forthcoming. Without active intervention from 'moral entrepreneurs', in other words, it is possible for activity which breaks a rule to continue unseen or be treated in a tolerant or accommodative manner.

Lemert (1951, 1967) has suggested the term 'primary deviation' to describe acts of rule-breaking of this kind which remain merely troublesome and relatively unnoticed especially by social-control agencies. Primary deviation, says Lemert (1967, 40), is "polygenetic, arising out of a variety of social, cultural, psychological and physiological factors, either in adventitious or recurring combinations". The important point about primary deviation is that "While it may be socially recognized and even defined as undesirable, primary deviation has only marginal implications for the status and psychic structure of the person concerned". In this it is to be distinguished from 'secondary deviation' which refers to "a special class of socially defined responses which people make to problems created by the societal reaction to their deviance. The existence of negative sanctions and the need to cope with the problems which they produce

for the deviating individual become, according to Lemert (1967, 40-41).

> ... central facts of existence for those experiencing them, altering psychic structure, producing specialized organization of social roles and self-regarding attitudes ... The secondary deviant, as opposed to his actions is a persona whose life and identity are organized around the facts of deviance.

Much of the fairly extensive critical comment generated by labelling theory has been directed to the neglect of aetiological considerations which Lemert's work in particular seems to imply. Lemert makes no assumption that primary deviation is produced in a completely unpatterned or random manner. However, in judging rule-breaking which remains unlabelled to be too manifold, inconsequential or haphazard to permit productive sociological analysis, he comes close to treating primary deviation as a residual category.

As critics have pointed out, losing sight of the origins of rule-breaking gives rise to a number of difficulties. On the one hand, one risks adopting a rather absurd position in which actors no longer have responsibility for their actions, where to use Aker's (1968) phrase, "people go about minding their own business and then - "wham" - bad society comes along and slaps them with a stigmatized label". On the other, if deviance is only to be thought of as that which is publicly so labelled, a sociologically interesting category such as the 'secret deviant' (Becker, 1963) - someone who manages to conceal his rule-breaking activities and so avoid labelling - becomes a logical nonsense (Gibbs, 1966). Furthermore, there are clearly areas of deviant behaviour - soft-drug use and many kinds of sexual deviance come to mind - where the deviant act has, it can be argued, hedonistic origins and where it may clearly become a stable feature of an individual's life without the intervention of control agents.

This is, however, somewhat to miss the point. What these criticisms reflect rather more than anything else is the strain of 'ironic consequentiality' which undoubtedly exists in the labelling tradition, and in Lemert's work in particular. This strain derives from the observation repeatedly made by labelling theorists that, as Matza (1969, 80) puts it,

> ... systems of control and the agents that man them are implicated in the process by which others become deviant. The very effort to prevent, intervene, arrest, and "cure" persons of their alleged pathologies may ... precipitate or seriously aggravate the tendency society wishes to guard against.

The traditional model of social control, of course, posited a sequence in which deviation was followed by sanction which was followed in turn by a reversion to conformity. It is perhaps not surprising therefore that, against this, labelling theorists should have wished to stress the novelty of their contention that negative reactions may lead those reacted to further into deviant behaviour and aid them to become more securely fixed into deviant identity. What was obscured as a result was that a more comprehensive and less ironic point was also being made. For labelling theorists, labels which define lines of action or attributes as deviant, confront those who possess or pursue them as facticities. Reactions to deviance do not simply involve physical sanctions but more crucially elements of stigmatization and degradation. Those who break rules face, as a result of apprehension and the application of a label, or the possibility thereof, definitions of their moral worth which they cannot wish away. To use Matza's (1969) terminology, ban has a bedevilling capacity.

It is an understanding of this point which has the greatest potential usefulness to the study of how heterogamous relationships

are formed. In part, to be bedevilled is to ponder the implications for one's own identity of the stigmatizing conceptions and negative evaluations of moral worth potentially or actually attached to one's activities or attributes. The doctrine of ironic consequentiality tends to stress as an outcome of that reflective appraisal the appropriation of stigma and the reorganization of self-regarding attitudes in the direction of self-derogation. It is also clear, however, that if negative definitions can be embraced they can also be evaded.

Evasion may mean precisely that - continued concealment -[1] a point which has encouraged labelling theorists usefully to investigate the negotiation of supply and access to what is needed in order to maintain deviant activity under conditions of secrecy (Becker, 1963; Plummer, 1975).

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[1] In many ways deviant worlds are melded to or shielded from conventional worlds (Rock, 1973, 79-83) in ways which may induce failures to recognize as deviant those capable of being so defined. Thus, aided on the one hand, as Matza (1969, 82) puts it, by "our tendency to overlook or to define generously" unless caused to do otherwise, deviance may escape unnoticed where the presence of those engaging in it appears in no way inappropriate to the setting. Because a pair of single women living together is not taken to be exceptional, a couple living in a lesbian relationship have less difficulty in concealing their deviant identities than might a homosexual pair (Ponse, 1978, 61). On the other hand, as Erving Goffman has consistently demonstrated, deviance can be shielded readily from the gaze of others through physical concealment or by the exercise of control over potentially damaging information. The physically or biographically blemished, for example, face as a major contingency in their lives the construction and maintenance of fronts and covers to conceal evidence of their stigmata (Goffman, 1963; see also Garfinkel, 1967, Cp.5), while in the mental hospital described in Asylums, "licence ... had a geography" (Goffman, 1961a, 205). Places existed in the hospital free from supervision because of their locale and used by the inmates for activities such as drinking which met with disapproval from hospital staff. For Goffman such niches are explicitly sites which permit an individual to distance himself from the implications for self which reside in institutional patterns of social control.

Evasion, however, can also be seen in another light as 'moral disassociation'. This term is used to refer, in the widest sense, to processes of legitimation and counter-definition through which are accomplished the suppression or neutralization of the negative implications of moral worth contained within a stigmatizing label.

Studies of sexual deviance suggest that within the context of enduring relationships the moral disassociation of stigmatizing conceptions capable of being applied by those outside the relationship seems to depend on the ability of relational partners to 'conventionalize' or 'aristocritize' deviant activity.[1] In the first case a definition of the situation is maintained in which the non-conventional elements of activity are de-emphasised at the same time as stress is laid upon its conventional context. Thus, the sexually active college females studied by Rains (1971) maintained a view of themselves as reputationally virtuous through a definition of their sexual behaviour which placed it within the conventional realms of courtship, the romantic-love complex and in relation to the structured use and non-use of contraceptive techniques. Where aristocritization takes place, on the other hand, the deviant character of the relationship is accepted but is transformed on the basis of its alleged superiority over conventional relationships. This is well seen in Ponse's (1978) study of the lesbian community. There, among some groups at least, the negative evaluation of the outside world was dealt with by attributing to women special and desirable qualities and through the assertion that, compared to heterosexual relationships, 'gay' relationships had a superior quality.

On the other hand, the management of stigmatizing labels emerging within a relationship appears to be effected through the operation of what McCall (1970) calls 'boundary rules'. This is a

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[1] In a slightly different context Veevers (1977) notes the use of what appear to be similar means to evade censure where couples have adopted a variant life-style by remaining voluntarily childless.

notion which McCall draws in the first instance from Goffman's (1961b) analysis of encounters. An encounter, according to Goffman, is a system of mutual activity organized around a focus or goal which provides the activity with a reason for its existence. Operative within an encounter are also a set of rules which serve to minimize the potentiality for disruption to the focus from the world beyond the encounter's boundary.

Three kinds of boundary rule exist. There are inhibitory rules which exclude elements to be found in the wider environment which are irrelevant or hazardous to the encounter. Also to be found are facilitating rules which specify for the interactants those elements which are necessary for the maintenance of the focus and the manner of their use, while, finally, there are transformation rules. These allow external elements into the encounter but only in an altered form which makes them harmless.

McCall argues that inhibitory, facilitating and transformation rules are also clearly to be seen at work in relationships. Here such rules serve, she argues, to promote intimacy between relational partners and to preserve the stability of the relationship by regulating the introduction into it of potentially disruptive elements. McCall herself does not identify the potential or actual application of stigmatizing labels as a source of disruption. For her, this is most likely to come from competing activities and involvements to which the relational partners might find themselves attracted. The primary function of boundary rules in her view, in other words, is an 'economic' one which ensures the stability of the relationship by governing the allocation of activities and external involvements permitted to relational participants. This, however, appears to be a relatively narrow view which would restrict the role of boundary rules in courtship only to the meeting of what has been referred to as the 'establishment' contingency, the

successful accomplishment of which depends precisely on the regulation of competing activities and involvements. There seems no intrinsic reason why boundary rules might not also be invoked to deal with the potential or actual application of stigmatizing labels.

Summary

The present chapter has involved a long and perhaps rather tortuous journey through the sociological literature on intermarriage, mate-selection, deviance and the internal dynamics of relationships. It was argued, first of all, that underlying studies of the aetiology of intermarriage is a particular conception of intergroup relations in the United States which gives rise to assumptions of pathology and discontinuity. It was also argued that particular interpretations of other strands of the literature on intermarriage permitted these assumptions to go unchallenged. In an attempt to look afresh at intermarriage it was proposed that the starting point for analysis should be with the openness of the mate-selection system in Western industrial societies. This, it was argued, gives rise to a situation in which marriages are formed as a result of progress through a career in which it is necessary for potential spouses to meet a number of contingencies deriving directly from the open character of mate-selection. From this, the point was made that couples who differed in their putative backgrounds might find that differences between them were routinely handled in the course of meeting the contingencies which faced them, but that under certain conditions they might face the application of stigmatizing labels. It was suggested that an understanding of the impact of labelling was best obtained through a notion of moral disassociation rather than in terms of the model of ironic consequentiality which forms a major strand in the literature on labelling theory. Moral

disassociation, it was contended, comes to be accomplished in relationships through various techniques of neutralization or through the use of boundary rules.

The way is now clear to proceed to the investigation of religious intermarriage in Northern Ireland. Using the perspective outlined above as a heuristic framework, attention is paid to the ways in which Catholic-Protestant couples proceed through courtship. Some of the patterns which allow members of one religious group access to potential spouses from the other are examined as is the creation of rules and labels relating to intermarriage. First, however, after a discussion of the research design, an attempt is made to marshall the available evidence relating to the extent and incidence of Catholic-Protestant intermarriage in Northern Ireland.

# PART II : ASPECTS OF CATHOLIC-PROTESTANT INTERMARRIAGE IN NORTHERN IRELAND

## Chapter 3 Research Design and Method

No less than any other piece of sociological research the present study has its origins in "idiosyncracies of person and circumstance" (Bell and Newby, 1977, 9). Indeed the first suggestion that Catholic-Protestant intermarriage in Northern Ireland might form an interesting topic for research arose in an entirely circumstantial manner, through the accidental overhearing of two quite separate conversations. The first of these occurred in the aftermath of the outbreak of widespread rioting in Belfast in the summer of 1969. A group of women in one of the Catholic areas was surveying the remains of some houses which had been burnt out during the disturbances the previous night. One woman pointed to a gutted house which had been occupied, she said, by a couple in a 'mixed' marriage. Although it would have required a foolhardiness - unusual even in a sociologist - for any of these women actually to have been present during the events of the previous night, they were unanimous in claiming that the couple's home had been singled out for special attention by a Protestant mob. This was so, they said, because those who had made up the mob had been intent on punishing the Protestant husband for taking the Catholic side in deference to his wife. The mob's desire for retribution in these circumstances was taken by the women as a particularly clear indication of Protestant wickedness for, they all agreed, the man in question could not conceivably have participated in the rioting on the Catholic side, since, after all, he <u>was</u> a Protestant.

These remarks pointed to the anomalous and vulnerable position of those who married beyond the boundaries of their own religious group, and for a time a study which looked at such couples and the difficulties which they might face was considered as a possible topic for an under-

graduate research project which had to be undertaken in the following academic year. In the event the study undertaken in this connection was quite a different one, unrelated to Northern Ireland, which was based entirely on secondary sources. Intermarried couples in Northern Ireland and the conversation which had given rise to a consideration of them for research purposes were, for the time being, more or less forgotten.

In the following year, however, when the question of choosing a thesis topic for postgraduate research was more immediately relevant, a study of Catholic-Protestant intermarriage once more suggested itself, again as the result of a casual encounter. A young man and a young woman were observed to enter the reference department of the Central Public Library in Belfast in a state of some agitation. After several whispered conversations and some forays into the card catalogue, the pair approached a library assistant for help in locating a book which would tell them about the Roman Catholic regulations on 'mixed' marriages. Supplied with the appropriate volume of the New Catholic Encyclopedia they retired to a corner of the library to read, make notes and discuss in animated whispers the information which it contained. Once again the question arose: Was there here a feature of Northern Irish society which might repay more detailed study?

An investigation of Catholic-Protestant intermarriage in Northern Ireland was potentially attractive for a number of reasons. First of all it was felt that a clear need existed for empirical research on various specific aspects of Northern Irish society which might serve to counterbalance the plethora of speculation and armchair theorizing which was then being directed towards the Northern Irish situation. Secondly, and purely practically, a study of intermarriage was at the time thought likely to be fairly manageable given limited resources and a distant base. In the third place, the topic itself fitted well with

pre-existing interests in the sociology of religion and the sociology of marriage and the family. Fourthly, and more specifically, it also fitted with a growing interest in the family as a nomos-building activity, which had been sparked by a reading of Berger and Kellner's by now (1964) well-known article on "Marriage and the construction of reality" and, in part, if less obviously, with a passing acquaintanceship with the American literature on collective behaviour. The latter seemed to capture with uncanny prescience the role played during the civil disturbances in Northern Ireland in the late 1960s by rumour, misinformation and stereotyping of a kind at least perhaps partly indicated in the account given above of the first of the two overheard conversations.[1] Perhaps, it was thought, one could learn by looking at the processes of reality formation which went on in Catholic-Protestant marriages in Northern Ireland something of how mythologies could be confronted and overcome. If it were known how this was accomplished in the crucial interpersonal context provided by marriage, might it not then be possible, the supposition was, to provide clues to the ways in which mythologies and their apparently destructive effects might be undermined in other less intimate settings?

Taking this very general question as a starting point the broad outlines of an initial research design were formulated. It was decided that it would be necessary ideally to obtain a sample of 30 to 40 Catholic-Protestant couples living in the Belfast urban area who, it was hoped, could be interviewed in depth about their perceptions of themselves, their respective groups, their relationships and about the coping mechanisms which it was presumed underlay relations between them.

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[1] Compare, for example, Janowitz's (1969) account of "communal riots" between Blacks and Whites in Chicago before the Second World War with Boyd's (1969) history of riots in Belfast.

In addition, however, it was also felt important to 'triangulate' (Denzin, 1970) this qualitative and inevitably exploratory material by reference to a variety of further data sources.

In part, it must be said, a commitment to triangulation arose simply from a personal desire to maximize explosure to as wide a range of methodological experience as possible, but it was also dictated by two other considerations. There was, first of all, the sheer absence of any kind of systematic material relating to the topic in the existing literature. For example, although there is a little relevant material in Walsh's (1970) work on the demographic situation in the Republic of Ireland (and it was later discovered in the genetics literature (Masterson, 1970, 1973)), no direct estimates appeared to exist for the extent of Catholic-Protestant intermarriage in Northern Ireland. The paucity of even basic material of this kind suggested quite strongly that the depth which it was hoped would be provided by the interview study would also need to be tempered by placing it within a broader contextual framework. Secondly, and more specifically, marital choice has been taken, conventionally, in the mate-selection literature to be related to patterns of social distance and spatial separation. These are factors which are also crucial to the existence and persistence of mythological and stereotypical conceptions of out-group members, and, it was quite clear in the light of what was by then becoming known about patterns of territoriality and the use of social space in the Belfast urban area (Boal, 1969), of manifest importance in Northern Ireland. Their role in relation to patterns of religious intermarriage seemed therefore also to be worthy of study. An additional significance of this aspect of the study was that it in theory allowed one to gauge how far what was likely to go on within relationships was the result of selectivity produced through the assortative character of the mate-

selection process. Accordingly, consideration was given to the possibility of carrying out a survey within the Belfast urban area which would address directly questions concerning how individuals used the urban space for initiating courtship activity and the ways in which such use might be connected to perceptions of spatial and social distance.

First steps

With these considerations in mind a trip was made to Northern Ireland at the end of 1971. At this stage it was hoped to do a number of things. Firstly, it was intended to approach the civil and religious authorities for access to marriage records which might yield information about the extent and incidence of Catholic-Protestant marriage. Second, an attempt would be made to talk to those - such as clergymen, marriage-guidance counsellors and social workers - who might have encountered intermarried couples in the course of their work and who might therefore be in a position to make available background information which might prepare the way for interviews with couples. Thirdly, it was hoped that the good offices of these professionals might be used in order to make contact with intermarried couples; and, fourthly, that the ground could be prepared for the survey on the use of social space in the Belfast urban area.

Success in attaining these ends was far from complete. As progress in the field produced contact with unsympathetic gatekeepers, revealed the absence of data sources and made necessary adaptation to the exigencies of a conflict situation, goals had to be modified and in some cases abandoned. In what follows are recounted some of the circumstances which made necessary modification of the initial research design. It should be noted that this material refers specifically to the three subsequent chapters on the demographic, historical and

ecological aspects of religious intermarriage in Northern Ireland. Discussion of the difficulties encountered in sampling intermarried couples themselves is for the moment deferred.

Access to statistical sources

At the suggestion of Professor Fred Boal of Queen's University, Belfast, an approach was made to the Registrar General for Northern Ireland in order to seek a special tabulation of the 1971 Northern Ireland census. This was readily agreed to although some members of the Registrar General's staff with whom the matter was discussed expressed the need for caution when interpreting the data because of incomplete coverage produced by the voluntary nature of the census question on religion. Because of the need to fit in with the schedule which had been drawn up for processing of the census results, and because of delays which were occasioned to the work of the Census Office by the situation in Northern Ireland, the special tabulation - the results of which are reported in Chapter 4 - was not finally made available until after a further eighteen months had elapsed.

Although the feasibility of obtaining data on the extent of Catholic-Protestant marriage from the census was established at this time, rather more difficulty was encountered in obtaining information on the yearly incidence of religious intermarriage in Northern Ireland. Statistics on the annual rate of interreligious marriage in Northern Ireland are not available from the civil authorities since the religion of the marrying partners is not recorded on the marriage registration form. In principle, however, such data should be available from the various religious bodies in Northern Ireland. Couples giving notice of their intention to marry to a Protestant minister are normally asked to specify the parish in which they reside, while a Roman Catholic priest must first obtain a dispensation from his bishop

to marry a Catholic and non-Catholic in a Catholic ceremony.

It happens, though, that the churches which are non-episcopal in their organization decentralize the pre-nuptial notification process. The Presbyterian Church, for example, has seventeen 'licensing ministers' in the Belfast area, all of whom keep their records separately and all of whom would need to be approached separately to gain access. It seemed likely that tapping this data source would be an extremely lengthy and time-consuming affair for relatively little return. The episcopal churches in Northern Ireland - the Church of Ireland and the Roman Catholic Church - do keep central diocesan records. Access was obtained to the Church of Ireland records for the diocese of Connor and the united dioceses of Down and Dromore, though in fact the number of intermarried couples uncovered in these records was quite small. It proved impossible, however, to gain access to or information from the records of the comparable Roman Catholic diocese of Down and Connor. According to the Vicar-General of the diocese such records are "completely confidential".

It was later discovered that some information on dispensations had earlier been made available to J. G. Masterson, a geneticist investigating the extent of consanguinity in Ireland (Masterson, 1970). Why there should be this variation in the gatekeeping policy of the diocese is unclear, but one suspects that Masterson had a number of factors operating in his favour. He is an eminent medical figure in Ireland. The data he obtained on 'mixed' marriages were more or less incidental to his main interest in consanguinity. Furthermore, his research was carried out quite some time before the start of the 'troubles' in Northern Ireland, and before intermarriage once again became a contentious issue in interchurch relations in Ireland. In any event, the episcopal authorities in Down and Connor now appear to be consistent in

their refusal to make available data on the incidence of Catholic-Protestant marriage to researchers, for they have recently turned down a request for information made by another social scientist, a French sociologist, Mlle. Marie-Alice Laulo.

Professional informants

Through contacts in the Voluntary Service Bureau in Belfast and the Northern Ireland Community Relations Commission, interviews were arranged with social workers in three geographically and socially distinct areas within the city. None of those interviewed, however, had had any noticeable contact with interviewed couples, largely it appeared because many of the areas which required the ministrations of social workers were relatively homogeneous in terms of religious composition. An approach was also made to the two marriage-guidance bureaux in Belfast, the one Catholic, the other non-denominational. The director of the latter expressed some interest in the research and agreed to be interviewed. In the case of the Catholic bureau, however, the director declined to co-operate on the grounds that there was nothing useful which could be said. There was thus no formal contact with the Catholic marriage advisory service, although at a later date the topic of 'mixed' marriages was discussed with an individual who had served as a counsellor with the bureau. It seems that from time to time staff at both bureaux had come into contact with intermarried couples. Those with whom the topic was discussed, however, were inhibited for two reasons from saying anything that was sufficiently detailed to be useful. On the one hand, it was taken as an article of faith that each case was unique and that it was therefore difficult to generalize about particular kinds of couples. On the other, there was also an unwillingness to discuss individual cases in detail because of the bureaux's very strict rules about preserving clients' confidentiality. In these cases, too,

confidentiality precluded any possibility of obtaining access to couples for interview.

Disappointingly, then, little that was concrete seemed to emerge from the interviews carried out with the social-work and marriage-guidance professionals, and in the beginning the same seemed to be true for the ten parish clergymen of various denominations who were interviewed. Six of these were Protestant ministers (one Methodist, three Anglican and two Presbyterian) and four were Roman Catholic priests. The initial contacts among Protestant and Catholic clergy were both men who had some reputation in Northern Ireland for being interested in social questions. Both of these initial contacts then suggested colleagues who might be willing to be interviewed. In addition, contact was also made with the Anglican and Roman Catholic chaplains at Queen's University, Belfast. The latter was unavailable at the time of contact but his deputy declined a meeting in any case on the grounds that he could see no way in which he could be helpful.

Prior to the beginning of fieldwork the expectation was that the professional group having most contact with intermarrying pairs would be parish clergy, both Protestant and Catholic, and that for this reason they could be expected to provide a good measure of background information on couples. Lying behind this expectation was an assumption that clergy were 'wise' in Goffman's (1963) sense of the term. They were seen, in other words, as having opportunities not afforded to others for routine interaction with intermarried couples by virtue of the servicing functions they were presumed to perform through counselling, marriage preparation and conducting the marriage ceremony itself. Because of this, it was hoped, clergy might have available to them a fund of typifications concerning the social characteristics of the intermarried, the conditions under which intermarriage

was most likely to occur, and so on, which would be useful in orienting the subsequent investigation.

In the event, the expectation that clergy were possessed of this kind of social knowledge about 'mixed' couples was fairly rapidly disconfirmed. With one or two exceptions, they seemed to have difficulty in talking about intermarriage in anything other than institutional terms. This was particularly true of the Catholic clergy interviewed who tended, as did those studied by Fulton (1975), to treat 'mixed' marriages solely in terms of the bureaucratic requirements laid upon them by Catholic canon law, and in particular the need to apply for a dispensation from the local bishop for the marriage to take place. Protestant clergy, on the other hand, directed their attention for the most part to the "unreasonableness" of the Catholic canonical legislation on religious intermarriage - singling out for attack the papal decree Ne Temere of 1908, which in their view stipulated that the children of a 'mixed' marriage must be brought up as Roman Catholics. Questioned, however, about what typically were the social characteristics of intermarried couples, the factors leading to intermarriage, or patterns of adaptation which might be found within marriage, clergy of all denominations were often at something of a loss and normally had little to say.

In reflecting on this phase of the initial fieldwork there was a tendency to do two things. The first was to wonder in retrospect whether or not a large or more judicious selection of professional informants would have yielded more positive results. While the possibility cannot be ruled out, the rather comparable results of Fulton's (1975) study of priests in the Irish Republic suggests that this would not have been the case at least as far as Catholic clergy are concerned. The second was an initial and hardly surprising tendency simply to regard clergy as being relatively 'bad' informants. As time passed,

however, it began to be recognized that this was quite unjust and that there were reasons in the work-lives of priests and ministers which did not require them to develop what Sudnow (1965) has referred to as "proto-typical portrayals and knowledge of operative social structures" in respect of intermarriage.

In the first place, it was clear that most of those interviewed had had relatively little experience of dealing with intermarried couples. As later became clear, this should perhaps have been expected, for until the early 1970s the yearly incidence of Catholic-Protestant intermarriage in Northern Ireland stood at a level which would have ensured that a Catholic priest might on average have married a 'mixed' couple perhaps less than once a year, and a Protestant clergyman even less frequently than that. Secondly, in time the accounts of couples also revealed that the primary form of contact with Catholic clergy at least was limited to those occasions necessary for the application for a dispensation and for the arrangement of the ceremony. Contact with couples tended therefore to be somewhat transitory and to have a relatively formal character. These were encounters, moreover, in which the priest tended to define his role as that of a routine bureaucratic functionary and in which attempts were made by all concerned to minimize any potentially problematic aspects of the couple's case which might have bureaucratic repercussions.

Professional informants were not, then, the hoped-for guides to the then still-unfamiliar terrain of the research topic. Yet, there are reasons why it would probably be misleading to judge the initial phase of the fieldwork as having been unfruitful. In the first instance, what had been uncovered were at least some of the constraints which reduce the usefulness of professional informants, and which have not previously been noted in accounts of their use in research (e.g.

Becker, 1970). In the present study these constraints were of four kinds: (a) ethical constraints on disclosure; (b) low referral rates for the client group of most interest to the researcher (both problems which might be encountered fairly commonly); together with (c) the existence of a professional ideology among the marriage-guidance counsellors; and (d) a professional-client relationship among the priests, both of which inhibited the development of a stock of generalizing typifications.

Secondly, by virtue of what it was that clergy were able to speak about, this phase of the fieldwork drew attention to an area not previously considered as a research topic. There was something striking about the unanimity of the responses made by both priests and ministers and the extent to which both sides referred almost automatically to Roman Catholic canonical legislation. Here was an area which was obviously problematic, which reflected a dominant concern and which apparently had roots which were deep-seated. It became important, therefore, both to understand what precisely was embodied in this legislation - what requirements it placed on priests - and what lay behind its apparently obnoxious character in the eyes of Protestant clergy.

If there was some irony in being placed in the same position as the couple who had helped spark interest in the research topic in the first place, it soon became apparent that their puzzlement had been well placed. This was so, it eventually became clear, because almost everyone who referred to the Ne Temere decree confused two separate issues. These were validity of a marriage in the eyes of the Roman Catholic Church, as against those conditions to do with the upbringing of children which were necessary to the granting of an episcopal dispensation from the impediment to marriage existing, according to Catholic teaching, where a prospective marriage partner was a non-Catholic. To clarify matters it became necessary to trace the origins of Ne Temere.

This was done in the first instance by following the development of Catholic canonical legislation concerning 'mixed' marriage to its origins at the Council of Trent, using papal documents and the commentaries of canon lawyers. As a result of this exercise it was discovered that the Tridentine and post-Tridentine legislation relating to the matter had not been continually applied in Ireland. However, since, fortunately, differences in the civil and ecclesiastical law relating to marriage had from time to time exercised legislators and administrators dealing with Ireland, it became possible to trace developments through accounts provided in Government blue books and official reports. Finally, it also became clear that the implementation of the Ne Temere decree in Ireland and more especially Protestant perceptions of its operation had been shaped in a dramatic and decisive way by the so-called McCann case, a cause célèbre concerning a 'mixed' marriage which had claimed the public attention in the early part of 1911. The public reaction to the McCann case was followed in Hansard, in the local and national Press of the time, and in the autobiographical account of the affair given by one of its leading protagonists.

In a sense, then, the failure of Protestant and Catholic clergymen to perform the informant role which had been assigned to them had serendipitous consequences. From a situation where no thought had been given to an historical investigation a particular exigency of the fieldwork situation had led to the investigation, reported in Chapter 5, of an important historical and political dimension to intermarriage in Northern Ireland which had not previously been appreciated, and which had remained unresearched.

## The survey

A good deal of thought was given to the design and execution of the survey and some preliminary steps were taken to establish the

feasibility of the exercise. In the end, however, it was decided that a number of major difficulties stood in the way of a survey, and with a good deal of reluctance this particular phase of the research was abandoned. In the first place, resources available to conduct a survey were limited. Secondly, the population covered by the sample would necessarily have to comprise those currently in the marriage market or who had just left it - both groups for whom no adequate and relatively available sampling frame existed. As an alternative some thought was given to the use of 'natural outcroppings' (Webb et al., 1966) in the form of schools, colleges or the university. In these cases, however, not only were there some difficulties of access but in studying students in particular one was looking at a group who were very likely to be unrepresentative in their use of space. Thirdly, by this time a resistance to surveys had grown up in Northern Ireland at least among some segments of the population. Bufwack's (1975) attempt to carry out a sample survey in a Northern Irish village was met with suspicion and a high refusal rate which she attributed to the frequent use made by the army of much-resented house-to-house censuses. Boal and Poole (1979) have noted, too, that a suspicion that information gathered in surveys might be used for intelligence purposes has made survey interviewing in Northern Ireland difficult.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, the experience of fieldwork in a conflict situation and contact with intermarried couples had given rise to a conviction that it was necessary for the researcher to become a gatekeeper protecting couples interviewed from any possibility of intimidation. In line with Simmel's (1950, 345) observation that "of all protective measures, the most radical is to make oneself invisible", it was decided that it was necessary to be selective about revealing the research topic to other audiences. It seems from the

account by Boal and Poole mentioned above and from that of Burton who was not permitted to carry out a survey in the area which he studied (Burton, 1978, 182) that the ability to survey in certain areas depends on the acquiescence of local paramilitaries. To gain an adequate picture of the ecological patterning of mate-seeking behaviour, areas controlled by the paramilitaries could not be left out of the survey. However, not only was there likely to be suspicion of a survey which asked about recreational pursuits and patterns of movement in the city, both of which might be associated with clandestine activity, but if the real purpose of the survey were discerned there was a risk of drawing attention to the topic of intermarriage and perhaps to intermarried couples themselves.

In the absence of a survey there were two alternative strategies available for the study of the ecology of mate-selection. One was to rely simply on relevant data from those intermarried couples who were being interviewed about courtship and marriage. Although data relating to the social use of space were collected from the intermarried couples interviewed in the study, its utility was somewhat undermined by the extent to which they had been geographically mobile. The material produced from this source tended, therefore, to have a rather piecemeal character from which it was difficult to build up an overall picture, especially relating to the Belfast area.

The second potential strategy which might be used at this point was to try to gain access to marriage registration records. This was not an approach which was at first regarded with much enthusiasm. The ease with which locational data can be extracted from marriage registration records and plotted on a map to produce measures of premarital residential propinquity has given the attempt by sociologists to harness geography to the study of mate-selection a long but

curiously sterile history. (A useful summary of the major studies in this area can be found in Katz and Hill, 1958.) As in so much research in mate-selection, the emphasis arising from these procedures is on outcome - the pair as they are at marriage - rather than on the process by which a population of individuals is sorted through mate-seeking and selection to produce a universe of marital dyads. In consequence one is left with a rather static view of the situation in which those choosing a mate are essentially passive actors concerned for the most part to allocate primacy in marital choice to the conservation of time and effort (see, for example, Catton and Smirich, 1964). As Kerckhoff (1956, 1963) has pointed out, however, the availability of mates is crucially affected both by patterns of residential segregation and by variation in the extensiveness of social networks. Clearly, too, opportunities for potential courtship relations are likely to depend on levels of associational participation and institutional involvement, while the pursuit of mates has presumably also been affected by the growing development of commercialized leisure. In other words, while marital partners are undoubtedly for the most part pre-maritally propinquitous and one can hardly deny the importance of time and effort as constraints on mate search, one can no less leave out of consideration in the ecology of mate-selection the actual way in which space is socially constructed and used. However, when after some little time had elapsed an opportunity arose through the good offices of a sympathetic Roman Catholic priest to obtain access in the records of a Roman Catholic parish to pre-marital residential location data of the kind traditionally used in propinquity studies, that opportunity was not spurned. An analysis of the data made available, which - usefully - refers to time periods before and after the onset of the 'troubles' in Northern Ireland, is presented in Chapter 6.

It should be noted that a number of self-imposed limitations

have been put on the presentation of this material. Some of those whose pre-marital addresses were plotted were intermarried. Given the small numbers involved and the fact that the material is presented graphically, it was feared that it would not be possible to preserve anonymity if it were fully apparent which particular Catholic parish was being studied. The attempt has been made consequently to conceal as far as possible the actual location of the area under consideration. Therefore, description of the area is forthcoming only where it is necessary to the interpretation of the ecological patterns found in the data. Further, while graphical data have been to scale, no precise indication of the scale values has been given. Additionally, the orientation of diagrammatic representations has been disguised quite deliberately. Nevertheless, it is judged that the patterns found in the pre-marital location data are presented in an interpretable and adequate manner.

Conclusion

The initial research design, such as it was, did not, then, survive for long the realities of data collection. Those phases of the research complementary to the interview study of intermarried couples (and, as is pointed out later, that phase of the research as well) fell victim by turns to the recalcitrancies inherent in the situation. When this happened there was little else but to improvise, to substitute, to take whatever opportunities were presented and to utilize as fully as possible the material that was available. As a result, inevitably the three chapters which follow - on demographic aspects of religious intermarriage in Northern Ireland, on the development of the Catholic canon law on 'mixed' marriages and on patterns of pre-marital location - cannot be regarded as forming a well-rounded and coherent whole. Yet they do, it is hoped, illuminate particular

aspects of the topic and permit a degree of what might be called 'loose triangulation'. In other words, while it is not the case here that the choice to be made between a number of competing theoretical positions can be facilitated through the use of multiple data-collection strategies, data from different sources do permit patterns in the data to be assessed for mutual consistency and the extent of their plausibility.

## Chapter 4 The Extent and Incidence of Religious Intermarriage in Northern Ireland

A major problem facing any researcher of interreligious marriage in Northern Ireland is that of determining its extent and incidence. This is no easy task with published information being scarce to the point of non-existence and with material held by the churches being generally unavailable. We are fortunate, then, in being able to present below some tentative material on the topic gleaned from two special tabulations of the Northern Ireland Census for 1971, kindly made available for this study by the Registrar General for Northern Ireland.

These tabulations are as follows: (1) Religion of Husband by Religion of Wife by Socio-economic Group of Husband for Belfast County Borough and for all of Northern Ireland, (2) Married Couples by Duration of Marriage (0-5) years (inclusive); Religion of Husband by Religion of Wife for Northern Ireland, Belfast County Borough, County Antrim and County Down. In all cases the standard census categories for religious affiliation (Roman Catholic, Presbyterian, Church of Ireland, Methodist and, a residual category, Other and Not Stated) were used. In both tabulations the oldest segment of the married population is unrepresented; Tabulation 1 excluding the economically inactive, many of whom are retired, while Tabulation 2 refers only to couples where the wife was aged under 60 years of age.

The data, too, suffer from a number of defects which will tend to produce an underestimation of the extent of religious intermarriage in Northern Ireland. In the first place, as the question on religious affiliation in the Northern Ireland Census is answered voluntarily, a number of intermarried couples may be 'hidden' in the Other and Not Stated category. Secondly, many formerly intermarried couples will show

up in the census as homogamous because of the conversion of one spouse to the faith of the other.[1] Third, Northern Ireland has a high rate of emigration and it is likely that many Catholic-Protestant couples leave.

To a certain extent, of course, the data presented hereafter are undermined by the lacunae involved. It is considered however that, provided its limitations are borne in mind, the present exercise is a useful one, for at least three reasons: (a) some figures are probably better than none at all, (b) some attempt at least can be made to actually assess the effects of conversion, emigration and non-response, (c) even if the data presented are not representative, they do tell us something about an important sub-group among intermarried couples in Northern Ireland, those who have stayed in Northern Ireland, who have remained intermarried and who are prepared to so identify themselves to the census office.

One additional point should be noted. Even though most of the material presented in this thesis was gathered in the Belfast area, it was felt that in order to provide a broad picture in the first instance, the demographic material shown here should focus on Northern Ireland as a whole, with the data for Belfast being presented in a somewhat summary form.

The extent of homogamy

Table 1, below, shows the stated religious affiliations of spouses enumerated in the 1971 Northern Ireland Census. Married pairs so enumerated in which only one spouse was a Roman Catholic total 3,611, a figure representing only 1.20% of all married couples enumerated.

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[1] Harris (1971) has shown that this is especially true in rural areas for marriages involving Protestants of different denominations. These were common in the district she studied, but were nearly always followed by the wife joining her husband's church.

TABLE 1

Religion of Husband by Religion of Wife,
Northern Ireland, 1971

| RELIGION OF HUSBAND | RELIGION OF WIFE | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Roman Catholic | Presby-terian | Church of Ireland | Meth-odist | Other and Not Stated | All Denomin-ations |
| Roman Catholic | 74,832 | 287 | 595 | 69 | 226 | 76,009 |
| Presbyterian | 576 | 85,295 | 2,847 | 437 | 874 | 90,029 |
| Church of Ireland | 1,012 | 2,840 | 66,805 | 691 | 988 | 72,336 |
| Methodist | 120 | 383 | 636 | 15,031 | 182 | 16,354 |
| Other and Not Stated | 726 | 1,231 | 1,443 | 383 | 43,600 | 47,381 |
| All Denominations | 77,266 | 90,036 | 72,324 | 16,611 | 45,870 | 302,109 |

Compared with this 1.20% figure, 2.60% of the married couples in Rose's (1971) sample were intermarried in the sense that only one spouse was a Roman Catholic. Yinger (1968) has suggested as a rule of thumb and we have some very tentative supporting evidence that about half of all marriages of this kind end in conversion, so that, as an upper limit, the census figures can, perhaps, be tripled to give some idea of the overall extent of 'mixed' marriages in Northern Ireland.

Very clearly, then, the extent of religious homogamy in Northern Ireland is striking, an observation which is underlined when, as in Table 2, the frequencies found in each cell of Table 1 are expressed using Bescanceney's (1965) method as a ratio of those frequencies expected if all marriages in Northern Ireland took place at random with respect to religion.

TABLE 2

Religion of Husband by Religion of Wife,
Actual-to-Expected Ratios,
Northern Ireland, 1971

| RELIGION OF HUSBAND | RELIGION OF WIFE | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Roman Catholic | Presby-terian | Church of Ireland | Metho-dist | Other and Not Stated |
| Roman Catholic | 3.849 | 0.013 | 0.033 | 0.017 | 0.020 |
| Presbyterian | 0.025 | 3.179 | 0.132 | 0.088 | 0.064 |
| Church of Ireland | 0.055 | 0.132 | 3.858 | 0.174 | 0.089 |
| Methodist | 0.029 | 0.079 | 0.162 | 16.719 | 0.074 |
| Other and Not Stated | 0.059 | 0.087 | 0.127 | 0.147 | 6.061 |

A number of interesting patterns are to be observed in the table. There appears to be a clear tendency for Catholic women to marry out more often than Catholic men, no matter what the Protestant denomination involved, and for 'mixed' marriages to occur most readily between Roman Catholics and members of the (Anglican) Church of Ireland. The extent of homogamy among Methodists is especially noteworthy, possibly a reflection of the small size of that group compared to the other major denominations in Northern Ireland. So too, it may be that while the 'Not Stated' group does a good deal to swell the appearance of homogamy in the residual category, many of the smaller religious bodies in the 'Other' category have, like the Methodists, a sect-like distaste for exogamy. The first two of these patterns we will return to discuss a little later; for the moment, however, we move on to consider estimates of the yearly incidence of Catholic-Protestant marriage in Northern

Ireland.

Yearly incidence

It is very difficult, given the nature of census data, to infer trends over time. Nevertheless, an attempt was made to obtain something of a longitudinal perspective on the yearly incidence of 'mixed' marriages in Northern Ireland by means of the special tabulation on marital duration. Calculating the year of celebration for marriages from their duration up to census night, 25 April 1971, Table 3 shows the numbers of Catholic-Protestant marriages in absolute and percentage terms for the six years preceding the 1971 census.

TABLE 3

Annual Intermarriage rates derived from marital durations

| Year of Celebration (April to April) derived from marital duration | Catholic-Protestant marriages Abs. | Catholic-Protestant marriages as % of all marriages that year |
|---|---|---|
| 1965-1966 | 181 | 1.97 |
| 1966-1967 | 193 | 2.06 |
| 1967-1968 | 222 | 2.42 |
| 1968-1969 | 278 | 2.99 |
| 1969-1970 | 369 | 3.66 |
| 1970-1971 | 406 | 4.30 |

Of course, as the figures in Table 3 strictly speaking represent survivors to enumeration date, we should be wary of accepting too readily the apparent rise in the incidence of interfaith marriages over the period in question. Certainly, the actual figures here should be regarded only as approximations. At the same time, a certain amount of circumstantial evidence is available which suggests

that some degree of confidence can be placed in the general upward trend shown.

In the first place, there appear to be no consistent trends, either in emigration rates for married couples or in the numbers of couples not stating a religious affiliation in the census, which would tend to cast doubt on the trend shown in the intermarriage figures. The numbers of 'mixed' marriages, for instance, might appear to be rising simply because fewer such couples were leaving Northern Ireland each year. Although no direct evidence is available on this point, we would not expect declining emigration rates for intermarried couples to occur in a situation where married couples in general were leaving Northern Ireland in greater numbers each year, as there are actually few grounds for supposing that heterogamous couples are less likely to emigrate than homogamous ones. Accordingly, to gain some notion of the extent of emigration among married couples generally, we adopted as a measure the comparison, in percentage difference terms, of marriages enumerated by year of celebration according to our tabulation with the numbers of marriages actually celebrated during the same twelve months.[1] The table below shows that insofar as there was a trend in the emigration of married couples from Northern Ireland between 1965 and 1971, it was generally an upward one, or at least that it did not vary in a way which would make us suspect that it 'masked' increasing numbers of interfaith couples staying in Northern Ireland.

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[1] These latter figures were obtained from the Annual Reports of the Registrar General for Northern Ireland.

TABLE 4

Percentage differences between numbers of marriages enumerated and numbers of marriages celebrated in the same period by year of marriage

| Year of marriage (April to April) derived from marital duration | % difference, married couples enumerated in the census and number of marriages actually celebrated |
|---|---|
| 1965-66 | 12.7 |
| 1966-67 | 13.8 |
| 1967-68 | 15.1 |
| 1968-69 | 13.0 |
| 1969-70 | 14.3 |
| 1970-71 | 23.6 |

Similarly, an apparent rise in the numbers of 'mixed' marriages might occur if the non-statement of religious affiliation by both partners in such a marriage was related to its duration. Again no direct evidence is available on this question; however, the percentage of married couples where both spouses were enumerated in the 'Other and Not Stated' category was calculated for each marital duration. Here, as before, no trend exists which might suggest a masking effect. Indeed the percentage of couples in which both husband and wife fall into the 'Other and Not Stated' category remains extremely constant over the six-year period, varying only between 16.04% and 16.78%.

More positively, despite our failure to obtain such material directly, some information on 'mixed' marriages in Ireland derived from Catholic ecclesiastical sources has been published. Unfortunately, none of this material is immediately comparable with ours; nevertheless

it does not run counter to it. Indeed, rather the opposite.

Firstly, it seems that the incidence of Catholic-Protestant marriages in Ireland as a whole has been rising in the 1960's. Brendan Walsh (1971), using an indirect method of estimation, found that only a relatively small number of 'mixed' marriages had taken place in Roman Catholic churches in the Republic of Ireland in 1961. He further concluded, using the same method, that the level of religious intermarriage in Northern Ireland was insignificant.[1] Yet, the official Catholic figures, obtainable for the last three years of that decade from the recently inaugurated Vatican Statistical Yearbook, Annuario Statistico della Chiesa, for Catholic-non-Catholic marriages celebrated under Roman Catholic auspices throughout Ireland show a not inconsiderable rise. In 1969, these totalled 876; in 1970, 1,087; and in 1971, 1,382. Quite possibly most of this rise is due to the further weakening of the demographic position of the Protestant minority in the Republic of Ireland. The upward trend, however, is large enough for one to suspect an increase in intermarriage in the North.

For Northern Ireland more specifically, we can make use of data collected by J.G. Masterson, an Irish geneticist. In the course of his research into cousin marriage in Ireland, Masterson (1970) was able to obtain from Roman Catholic episcopal sources the total numbers of marriages of different kinds taking place in each of the Irish dioceses for the ten-year period 1959-68. From these materials he was additionally able to calculate for each diocese and over the ten-year period the incidence of 'mixed' marriages performed in Roman Catholic churches. Taking, as Masterson does, the dioceses of Armagh, Down and Connor, Dromore, Derry and Clogher as representing effectively the state of Northern Ireland, the total number of Catholic-Protestant

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[1] Religious intermarriage in Walsh's model is taken as accounting for discrepancies between marriage rates by form of ceremony and the proportions in various denominations of the ever-married.

intermarriages found here from 1959-68 was 1,645. In other words, we have a yearly average of just over 150 in a period bordering and overlapping the earlier part of our marital duration table and for an almost comparable area. As it happens, in a later paper, Masterson (1973) using a similar procedure was able to show intermarriage figures for 1971, the year bounding the 'upper' side of our marital duration table, but only for the dioceses of Down and Connor in the North (which encompasses Belfast, incidentally) and Dublin in the South. Once again, a somewhat substantial rise seems to be indicated for 'mixed' marriages in Catholic churches in Down and Connor alone totalled 534 in 1971, having according to Masterson's information "increased appreciably over the previous year's figures" (Masterson 1973, 64).

If we can accept, then, that the 1960's in Northern Ireland saw an upward rise in the incidence of Catholic-Protestant marriages, we are still faced with the problem of accounting for why this should have been so. Again the evidence is scanty. What there is, however, suggests that it would probably be unwise to look for a particular single cause in this regard.

Certainly, the influx of British soldiers towards the end of 1969 has probably had some effect on the intermarriage rate. It would seem, though, that this has been confined to 1971. The spate of tarring and feathering incidents toward the end of that year suggests that such marriages were indeed becoming relatively common. This is unlikely to be the case today, while before 1971 their impact may have been somewhat more limited. Members of the Church of England, as we might suppose most of these soldiers to be, are classified in the Northern Ireland census as members of the (Anglican) Church of Ireland. Yet the percentage of Catholic-Protestant marriages involving an Anglican man

and a Roman Catholic woman was actually lower (26.6%) in 1970-71 than it was in 1965-66 (30.9%).

Of more lasting importance presumably were the effects of the complex social and cultural changes affecting Northern Ireland in the period in question. Probably, one component here was the increasing 'liberalisation' of the Roman Catholic Church since the Second Vatican Council. It can be claimed that this liberalising trend has had less effect in Ireland than it has had elsewhere, but judging from the figures published in Annuario Statistico della Chiesa, the rise in the numbers of 'mixed' marriages recorded in Ireland is but part of a general Western European trend.

One direct consequence here is that there may now be less pressure for the conversion of the non-Catholic partner in a proposed interreligious marriage. Figures, again from the Annuario Statistico della Chiesa, show that adult baptisms in Roman Catholic churches in Ireland decreased between 1968 (357) and 1971 (259).[1] This hardly provides a complete explanation, however, because, even assuming all adult baptisms to be connected with 'mixed' marriages, conversions have decreased more slowly than the rise in interfaith marriages. At the same time, though, judging from our interview data, the post-Vatican II era in Roman Catholicism may have opened the way for a new type of religious intermarriage - the 'ecumenical' marriage, although it is impossible to assess how important quantitatively such marriages might be.

More locally, the political changes which preceded the onset of open communal violence in Northern Ireland may also have contributed to rising intermarriage rates. The feeling, detected by Rose (1971, 305-6), that communal tensions had indeed eased during the O'Neill period may have encouraged Catholic-Protestant liaisons which only

[1] Once again, this seems to be a general trend throughout Europe.

reached marriage even as the political situation was deteriorating. Certainly, interview material suggests that the Civil Rights movement was important for some of the intermarried couples who had been at university together during this period.

So too, some evidence, to be reviewed in a little more detail later, suggests that even as the onset of civil disorder was encouraging the maintenance of boundaries between the two communities in Northern Ireland, the changes associated with widespread housing redevelopment in Belfast were actually lessening the potential for communal social control of courtship practices.

Catholic-Protestant intermarriage and socio-economic factors

The extent to which, in Northern Ireland, the incidence of religious intermarriage is related to socio-economic factors is an interesting one, and broadly there are two ways of looking at it. One is to take the view often expressed informally in Northern Ireland that the social separation of Catholics and Protestants there is more complete at the working-class level and that as a result interconfessional marriage will tend to be the province of the middle class. The other is to assume that insofar as "In Northern Ireland ... religion has some of the properties and correlates of rank" (Boserup and Iversen, 1967), then religious preferences in the choice of a mate will be inhibited or reinforced by perceptions of relative status levels.

We can assess the adequacy of the first formulation directly from our special tabulation showing Religion of Husband by Religion of Wife by the Socio-economic group of the Husband[1] and Table 5 displays by the husband's SEG the numbers and percentages of Catholic-Protestant couples enumerated in Northern Ireland in 1971.

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[1] Unfortunately we do not have any separate information on the socio-economic level of the wives enumerated. Such information, however, is not likely to be completely reliable due to the large numbers of women who are economically inactive.

TABLE 5

Intermarried Couples by Socio-Economic Group of Husband
Northern Ireland, 1971

| Socio-Economic Group of Husband | | Couples enumerated in which only one spouse is a Roman Catholic | Couples enumerated in which only one spouse is a Roman Catholic |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | No. | % |
| I. | Employers and Managers (large establishments) | 101 | 1.08 |
| II. | Employers and Managers (small establishments) | 186 | 0.94 |
| III. | Professionals (self-employed) | 22 | 0.58 |
| IV. | Professionals (employees) | 104 | 1.45 |
| V. | Intermediate Non-manual | 183 | 1.20 |
| VI. | Junior Non-manual | 301 | 0.99 |
| VII. | Personal Service Workers | 65 | 2.76 |
| VIII. | Foremen and Supervisors (Manual) | 122 | 1.07 |
| IX. | Skilled Manual | 955 | 1.22 |
| X. | Semi-skilled Manual | 546 | 1.37 |
| XI. | Unskilled Manual | 392 | 1.20 |
| XII. | Own-account Workers (non-professional) | 161 | 1.13 |
| XIII. | Farmers (employers and managers) | 6 | 0.14 |
| XIV. | Farmers (own account) | 40 | 0.18 |
| XV. | Agricultural Workers | 36 | 0.57 |
| XVI. | Members of the Armed Forces | 358 | 12.70 |
| XVII. | Occupation Inadequately Described | 33 | 1.34 |
| | ALL ... ... ... | 3,611 | 1.20 |

From the table it is clear that while Harris's (1971) remarks about the avoidance of 'mixed' marriages in the countryside are borne out, Catholic-Protestant marriages in which the husband is a manual worker exceed in absolute terms those where he is engaged in a non-manual occupation. A slightly different pattern emerges, though, if we take into account the relative size of the groups from which these couples come (Bescanceney, 1965) by computing actual-to-expected ratios by occupational level. Table 6 shows that there is now little difference between the non-manual and manual groups, although the marked paucity of religious intermarriage in the farm group remains clearly visible.

TABLE 6

Catholic-Protestant Marriages: Actual-to-Expected Ratios by Occupational Level, Northern Ireland, 1971

| Occupational Level* | | Actual-to-Expected Ratio |
|---|---|---|
| Non-manual | (SEGs I -VI) | 0.037 |
| Manual | (SEGs VII-XII) | 0.035 |
| Farm | (SEGs XIII-XV) | 0.004 |

*SEGs XVI and XVII excluded

The common assumption of the middle-class nature of inter-religious marriage in Northern Ireland is somewhat overstated then. However, if we can rely on the generally small numbers involved, an examination of the variation in interconfessional marriage by specific socio-economic group suggests that a grain of truth may remain. Specific occupationally related milieux, it is suggested, foster or inhibit the selection of a marriage mate across religious boundaries.

Not unsurprisingly, despite tarring and feathering incidents in more recent years, the percentage of religiously 'mixed' marriages is highest where the husband is in the services. Before the present 'troubles' servicemen, most of whom presumably would be from outside Northern Ireland, could probably be counted on to be less deterred than a native by religious considerations in the choice of a mate. Presumably, too, they were unlikely to face negative sanctions from their comrades for doing so. (On the other hand, though, the prospect of a British serviceman as a son-in-law may have outraged Catholic parents with strong Republican sympathies.)

More unexpected, though, is the relatively high incidence of Catholic-Protestant marriage in cases where the husband is a personal service worker. However, the unsocial hours worked by personal service workers probably means their spending their leisure time with others similarly employed. This combination of frequent interaction with a restricted field of eligibles may very well encourage heterogamy. (Interestingly, Boal (1974) notes that women personal service workers in the Greater Belfast area have a high rate of illegitimate births.)

If intermarriage among personal service workers is the result of a closed milieu, it is quite likely that intermarriage among professional employees (SEG IV) is the result of an open one, as we are possibly seeing in this group the effect of the university as a locale for mate selection.[1] What is actually surprising here is that the influence of the university is not greater, though, to a certain extent, as SEG IV has the highest percentage of couples where both spouses are in the 'Other and Not Stated' category (20.6% against 14.4% for all groups), the actual extent of intermarriage may be understated.

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[1] On campus mate-selection see Leslie and Richardson (1956) but also Barritt and Carter (1972, 76).

On the other hand, the low frequency of Catholic-Protestant marriages found where the husband is in SEG III (professional self-employed) is interesting because it might suggest, again following Harris, that the extent to which the self-employed in Northern Ireland rely for business on their co-religionists is important here. So that, not only might this necessarily restrict the field of eligibles, it may also mean that an out-marriage can sometimes be seen as a direct threat to livelihood.

We are, of course, faced once again with the problems of non-response, emigration and conversion; and as far as non-response is concerned, we have already pointed out its possible significance in the professional employee category. Overall, though, there are few grounds for supposing a biassing effect one way or the other with respect to levels of interfaith marriage. It may well be that the motivations behind refusals to answer the question on religion in the census vary from group to group. Possibly, in the non-manual group there is more of a tendency to regard religion as a personal matter, "nobody's business but my own". On the other hand, 'mixed' couples in the manual group may feel there is something of a risk in identifying themselves on a census form. Quite possibly, then, these tendencies cancel each other out.

Similarly with emigration, one might suppose that, on the one hand, intermarried couples in which the husband is a non-manual worker would be better equipped in terms of skills acceptable outside Northern Ireland. This is very probably true for those wishing to emigrate to Australia, say, or to Canada, but the lack of a skill or of a professional qualification may not be a bar to migration to Britain - indeed the Economic Activity tables in the 1966 sample Census for England and Wales reveal that a large percentage of Northern Ireland-born workers there are involved in manual work.[1]

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[1] General Register Office, 1969

Conversion, however, is a different matter. There appear to be no indications, in one direction or the other, which might help us to decide how conversion might be related to occupational level.

As we indicated above, an alternative way of looking at the link between intermarriage and socio-economic factors is to consider the ways in which relative status levels between religious groups will affect actual mate choices. Of particular interest in this light are the patterns mentioned earlier whereby there are denominational differences in intermarriage rates and a clear tendency for Catholic women to marry 'out' more than Catholic men.

In fact the tendency for Catholic women to enter 'mixed' marriages in greater numbers than Catholic men has been noticed in Holland, Germany and Switzerland (Van Leeuwen, 1959).[1] Holland, Germany and Switzerland, like Northern Ireland, may be termed 'confessional' rather than denominational societies. To a certain extent in all of them, Catholics have tended to be disadvantaged (on Holland, for instance, see Lijphart, 1968), so that it might be that Catholic women who marry 'out' in these societies are also marrying 'up'.[2]

Now the suggestion that interreligious marriages in Northern Ireland in which the wife is a Roman Catholic are effectively hypergamous unions has a good deal of merit, but it is not without its difficulties. Various writers (Davis 1941, Merton 1941 and Van den Berghe 1960a, 85) have tended to see hypergamy as an avenue for, as Van den Berghe puts it, the "maximalization of status" (Van den Berghe 1960a, 85). However, this naturally leads one to wonder why intermarriage should not be altogether more common. Indeed, if we take Boserup and Iversen's (1967) point that middle-class Catholics in Northern Ireland are "rank-disequilibrated" by virtue of their religious affiliation, then we

[1] The tendency, however, appears somewhat less marked in the United States (Monahan, 1971, but see also Greeley, 1966).

[2] On the general tendency for women to marry up, see Berent (1954).

might expect to see a good deal of hypogamy on the pattern of Black-White marriages in the U.S.[1] or even that most conversions associated with Catholic-Protestant marriages would be in the Protestant direction. Yet this hardly seems to be the case.[2]

One alternative suggestion might be that instead of Catholic women being keen to gain status by marrying out, we are rather seeing the results here of Protestant women being loath to enter a 'mixed' marriage for fear of marrying 'down'. This is an appealing proposition because, as we shall attempt to show elsewhere, interview data would seem to suggest that status elements <u>are</u> implicit in negative attitudes to intermarriage expressed by Protestants. Furthermore, such data would also suggest that while status elements do seem to enter into the courtship process itself, they are 'handled' interpersonally, in ways which do not suggest the operation of the sorts of bargaining strategies implicit in much of the literature on hypergamy (cf. especially, Merton 1941).

Evidence which would allow us to test this further in any direct fashion is unfortunately lacking. Some indirect material, however, is available. For the purposes of this study, Professor Richard Rose, Professor of Politics at the University of Strathclyde, has kindly made available for secondary analysis material from his 1968 'Loyalty Survey' in Northern Ireland, and it is to this that we now turn for some additional indications.

Professor Rose sought to incorporate into his questionnaire a number of measures of communal cohesiveness. Three of these measures are particularly relevant here - those on (a) the extent of religious segregation of friendship groups, (b) the extent to which the respondents

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[1] Although see here Carter (1966) and Heer (1974).

[2] On conversions, for instance, see Rose (1971, 336).

think there is a need for co-religionists to "stick together", and (c) the perceptions of sanctions against religious conversion.[1]

If our first hypothesis holds, that Catholic women perceive status gains from marrying out, then we might expect Roman Catholic women to be more likely than Roman Catholic men to find their friends outside the Catholic community, and for them to be less ready to see a need for co-religionists to stick together. If the converse holds true, that Protestant women tend to avoid out-marriage more than their menfolk, then we would expect Protestant men to be less worried than Protestant women about sanctions attached to religious conversion.

Patterns of response to the three questions already indicated were examined for unmarried respondents (N=332) while controlling for sex and religious group (i.e. Roman Catholic versus All Other Denominations). On the measure of religious segregation in friendship groups and of the perceived need for co-religionists to stick together, there appear to be distinct Catholic-Protestant differences. However, these hold, apparently, regardless of sex. Thus, 35.5% of unmarried Catholic men in Rose's sample (N=76) reported that half or more of their friends were of the 'opposite' religion, but only a marginally higher number, 35.8%, of Roman Catholic women (N=81) were in the same category. (The figures for 'Other Denomination' men are 19.1% (N=89) and for women 19.8% (N=86).) Similarly, 40.8% of Roman Catholic men in the sample and 39.5% of the Catholic women, compared with 30.3% of 'Other Denomination' men and 31.8% 'Other Denomination' women, disagreed with the statement that "persons of the same religion should stick together and help one another". With regard to the perception of sanctions against religious conversion, however, the pattern differs somewhat. Here, 15.7% of 'Other Denomination' men together with 13.2% of Roman Catholic men

[1] Unfortunately, Rose asked no direct question on attitudes to out-marriage.

thought that religious conversion would make "not much" or "no difference" to the family and friends of someone they knew who changed his religion. For women, the percentages are 9.3% for 'Other Denominations' and 9.8% for Roman Catholics.

Given the patterns found in the survey data, there would seem to be little evidence to suggest that Catholic women are any more willing to marry out than their menfolk. In other words, our first hypothesis does not seem to hold. The second hypothesis, however, does not find unequivocal support either. Insofar as attitudes to religious conversion can be generalized to interreligious marriage, then certainly Protestant women seem to show greater reluctance than Protestant men to face sanctions associated with the crossing of group boundaries, and, clearly, of the four groups Protestant men appear to be the least worried by penalties surrounding religious conversion. At the same time, however, Catholic men are less worried about sanctions than those in either female group. It is possible, though, that replies to the religious conversion question may be less good predictors of the perceptions of communal reactions to a proposed 'mixed' marriage for Catholics than it is for Protestants. Again relying on interview data, it seems that adverse Catholic reaction to a proposed interfaith marriage may be mollified to the extent that the couple follow the Roman Catholic regulations relating to the celebration of 'mixed' marriages. As this applies only to Catholics, however, the differences between men and women on the Protestant side in their perceptions relating to the crossing of religious boundaries should remain.[1] As a result, then, Catholic men are, presumably, faced with a diminished marriage market as far as Protestant women are concerned.

We are, of course, not able to infer from the survey data presented that the reluctance of Protestant women which we have pointed

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[1] In fact, if anything the balance should shift in favour of Protestant men since the Catholic regulations stipulate that the marriage should be in the church of the Catholic partner. Where this is a male, the Catholic stipulation runs counter to the prevalent custom that a marriage should take place in the bride's church.

to is due to their status perceptions of a possible Catholic mate. However, a certain weight is added to this view by the patterns, already noted, of out-marriage by denomination. Looking back to Table 2 once more, we are reminded that, roughly speaking, Anglican-Roman Catholic marriages occur about twice as frequently as those between Catholics and Presbyterians. This is to be expected if status factors are an influence here, since as Presbyterians in Northern Ireland tend to stand highest in socio-economic status (cf. for example Barritt and Carter, 1972), then we would expect them to be least ready to marry into that group, the Roman Catholics, whose members tend to be ranked lowest.

At the same time, alternative explanations for the denominational patterns in interconfessional marriages which we have described are available to us. Several writers[1] have suggested that the greater the similarity in the beliefs and practices of two religious groups, the less social distance between them, and consequently, the greater likelihood of marriage between them.[2] Certainly it would seem that the Presbyterian Church in Ireland stands further from the Roman Catholic Church in matters of theology, organization and liturgy than does the Anglican Church, and for that reason marriage with a Roman Catholic might be less congenial for a Presbyterian than for a member of the Church of Ireland.

Again, differences between denominations with respect to intermarriage may be related to differing patterns of associational involvement and doctrinal orthodoxy (see, for instance, Lazerwitz, 1971). Unfortunately this would be difficult to test out using Rose's data as the number of respondents within each Protestant denomination would begin to be quite small. Some interesting material though is to be

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[1] Cavan (1971), Bealer et al (1963); see also Rokeach (1960, 322-339).

[2] Unfortunately the evidence presented is contradictory and each of these studies suffers from particular methodological weaknesses.

found in Greer's (1971) survey of Northern Irish 18-year-olds (who will soon, presumably, be entering the marriage market). Greer found that Anglicans of both sexes were less likely to believe in God or to attend church regularly. Furthermore, for both Presbyterians and those in the Church of Ireland, young men wereless inclined towards belief and regular church attendance than were the women.

It seems likely that both of these factors do have some relevance to the pattern under discussion, yet it would be unwise to completely dismiss our previous argument. Not only is the status argument reinforced as we have indicated by interview material, but also it is difficult to see how the sex differences in out-marriage rates might be interpreted on the two arguments just presented. Thus, it would be difficult to see how the Church of Ireland is more 'similar' to the Roman Catholic Church for women than for men. Similarly, Greer's findings are not surprising in view of the general supposition that women are generally more 'religious' than men, but if this is also true for Catholic women, why should they marry out more than Catholic men? The status argument at least has the benefit of parsimony.

Before leaving this discussion it is necessary once again to return to the possibility that the patterns we have been discussing are simply artifacts of differential conversion, emigration and non-response rates. Thus, if the tendency which we have already mentioned, for women to convert more readily in interdenominational marriages than men holds true also for marriages across the Catholic-Protestant divide, and, given, as Rose (1971, 336) suggests, a net gain from conversions in Northern Ireland to Roman Catholicism, then we might expect the census figures for Roman Catholic husbands with Protestant wives to be depressed somewhat. It is actually possible that this may be a factor in Scotland,[1]

[1] See the marriage and conversion figures given in Spencer (1967 and 1969).

but the material we cited earlier on the perceptions of sanctions against religious conversion suggests that this would not be so for Northern Ireland.

Again, as Walsh (1971) has shown, Catholics in Northern Ireland are more likely to emigrate than are Protestants, with Catholic men migrating more readily than Catholic women. It may be that, insofar as having a Protestant wife is in itself no necessary hedge against economic insecurity for a Catholic man, then the outflow from Northern Ireland will involve more Roman Catholic men with Protestant wives than vice versa. If this were so, then we might expect a cumulative effect to become apparent in the figures we have presented for intermarriage by marital duration. In fact, the further one moves away from the census year the fewer the numbers of Catholic husbands with Protestant wives recorded. This does not, however, appear to be a major trend insofar as the proportion of Protestant-Catholic marriages to Catholic-Protestant marriages[1] in 1965-66 is 2.01:1 as opposed to 1.86:1 in 1970-71. It is difficult too to see how differential emigration rates could account for the denominational patterns involved in intermarriage, as it seems that Presbyterians are less likely than Anglicans to emigrate (at least in the crude figures presented in Barritt and Carter, 1972, 108) and thus are more likely to be revealed by the census.

As for non-response, it may be that as, impressionistically, Catholics are more likely to be wary of revealing their religious identity to a government body, and the husband is more likely to complete the census form than the wife, then a bias will be introduced into the census figures for Roman Catholic men with Protestant wives. Unfortunately there is no independent evidence which would allow us to evaluate how far this might be true. It is worth mentioning though that Walsh's (1971) estimates for the Irish Republic suggest a pattern of sex

[1] Putting the religion of the husband first.

differences in intermarriage rates similar to those we have proposed for Northern Ireland. And while Walsh conceded his figures are crude, they are computed in a manner which would not be significantly affected by the non-response bias we have suggested.

Belfast

To now, our attention has been fixed on Northern Ireland as a whole. We are, however, able to compare these findings with material for Belfast County Borough. Marriages within the County Borough enumerated in 1971, in which only one spouse was a Roman Catholic number 1,101 or 1.54% of the married couples in the Borough. The percentage figure, then, is slightly greater than that for Northern Ireland as a whole, but it is interesting to note that Belfast which accounts for 23.6% of married couples in Northern Ireland has 30.5% of the intermarried couples enumerated.

Computing actual-to-expected ratios again (Table 7), we find a pattern similar to that for Northern Ireland as a whole.

TABLE 7

Religion of Husband by Religion of Wife,
Actual-to-Expected Ratios,
Belfast County Borough, 1971

| RELIGION OF HUSBAND | RELIGION OF WIFE | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Roman Catholic | Presbyterian | Church of Ireland | Methodist | Other and Not Stated |
| Roman Catholic | 4.784 | 0.017 | 0.032 | 0.019 | 0.020 |
| Presbyterian | 0.031 | 3.183 | 0.198 | 0.095 | 0.076 |
| Church of Ireland | 0.058 | 0.204 | 3.428 | 0.175 | 0.019 |
| Methodist | 0.025 | 0.091 | 0.164 | 10.934 | 0.122 |
| Other and Not Stated | 0.072 | 0.105 | 0.134 | 0.130 | 5.754 |

However, Presbyterians in Belfast, it seems, are slightly more likely to marry out, and the extent of homogamy among Methodists, while less marked in Belfast itself, is still considerable.

Patterns of intermarriage by socio-economic level in Belfast County Borough, too, remain close to those for Northern Ireland as a whole.

TABLE 8

Intermarried couples by Socio-economic Group of Husband

Belfast County Borough, 1971

| SEG | % | SEG | % | SEG | % |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| I | 0.83 | VII | 2.31 | XIII | - |
| II | 1.45 | VIII | 0.92 | XIV | - |
| III | 0.53 | IX | 1.13 | XV | - |
| IV | 0.79 | X | 1.29 | XVI | 6.93 |
| V | 1.07 | XI | 1.32 | XVII | 1.49 |
| VI | 0.76 | XII | 1.31 | All | 1.54 |

- = less than 3 cases

We can note, though, something of a drop in the percentages of intermarried couples in Belfast where the husband is a non-manual worker, although this is probably simply a reflection of the presumed tendency for couples in the higher socio-economic bracket to live in the suburban and newer housing areas lying outside the Borough boundary. However the drop, especially among the higher non-manual groups, is offset by rises in SEGs XI and XII (unskilled workers and non-professional own-account workers) which suggest some little permeability of religious boundaries within the city.

The figures from our marital duration table for Belfast County Borough also come close to those for Northern Ireland as a whole, as we show in Table 9.

TABLE 9

Annual Intermarriage Rates
derived from Marital Durations
Belfast County Borough, 1965-66/1970-71

| Year of celebration (from duration) | Catholic-Protestant marriages | Catholic-Protestant marriages as a % of all marriages enumerated in that year |
|---|---|---|
| 1965-66 | 33 | 1.91 |
| 1966-67 | 40 | 2.31 |
| 1967-68 | 42 | 2.44 |
| 1968-69 | 56 | 3.11 |
| 1969-70 | 81 | 3.95 |
| 1970-71 | 92 | 4.11 |

Summary

To summarise, then, Catholic-Protestant marriages form only a small percentage of all the marriages enumerated in the 1971 Northern Ireland census, even if the effects of conversion, emigration and non-response are taken into account. The rate of intermarriage, however, does appear to have risen in the five years prior to 1971. Although, quite clearly, some groups are more 'prone' to contract interfaith marriages than others, they do not seem to be the prerogative of non-manual or manual workers alone. The tendency for Catholic women to marry out more often than Catholic men and for Catholics to marry Anglicans more frequently than other denominations probably results from

the entrance of status considerations into the choice of a mate. Patterns of intermarriage for Belfast County Borough resemble those for Northern Ireland as a whole.

## Chapter 5 The Historical Development of the Application of Catholic Canon Law on 'Mixed' Marriages in Ireland and the Protestant Reaction to it

If available knowledge concerning religious intermarriage in Northern Ireland has been meagre, commentators have been agreed on the significance which must be attached to the rules by which the Roman Catholic Church governs the marriage of one of its members to a non-Catholic. Following Becker's (1963) recommendation that sociologists should study rule creation, an attempt is made here to outline the development of Roman Catholic canonical legislation on 'mixed' marriages as it has affected Ireland over the last three centuries.[1] In particular attention is directed to the origins and results of the papal decree of 1908 known as Ne Temere which has for the better part of the century regulated the circumstances under which the Roman Catholic Church will regard as valid a marriage between one of its adherents and a non-Catholic. It is this particular piece of legislation to which has been attributed a set of deleterious consequences. It has been argued, for example, that Ne Temere played a major role earlier in the century in driving a wedge between Catholics and Protestants in Ireland (de Paor, 1971). Further, the decree has been seen as a continuing stumbling block to better community relations in Northern Ireland (Barritt and Carter, 1972; Edwards, 1970; Rose, 1971) and as a major factor contributing to the continuing numerical decline of the Protestant minority in the Irish Republic (Gray-Stack, 1970; Walsh, 1970).

### The decree 'Tametsi'

One minor confusion concerning Ne Temere has arisen because a number of commentators (for instance, Barritt and Carter, 1972;

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[1] The concern here is solely with marriages between Roman Catholics and members of other faiths. Protestant interdenominational marriages will not be considered. It should be noted, however, that a significant chapter in the history of Irish Presbyterianism involved the controversy over the question of whether a Presbyterian minister could

de Paor, 1971) have suggested that the decree was promulgated at the Council of Trent. In fact, the Tridentine decree to which they refer was called Tametsi and, initially at any rate, it had very little to do with 'mixed' marriages. Tametsi was designed to regulate the contracting of clandestine marriages (Cunningham, 1964; de Bhaldriathe, 1971) that is, marriages where a couple lived together after having secretly exchanged the marriage vows with one another. These marriages, although regarded as sinful by the Church were still valid (i.e. indissoluble) but they often led to abuses where, for instance, to cite the example supplied by the Council fathers, a man could leave his first wife by a valid but secret marriage and then contract a second, public, and in the eyes of the Church, adulterous marriage with another woman. After Tametsi, marriages were required to be subject to the 'canonical form'; that is, a marriage to be valid had to be contracted in the presence of the parish priest of the place (or his authorised deputy) and two or three witnesses. There was however the difficulty that promulgation of the decree in Protestant countries would bring the Church into conflict with a hostile civil power. Fortunately, however, to facilitate its reception by the faithful, the decree was designed to be promulgated parish by parish. In the event, while Tametsi was speedily implemented in countries like Spain and Portugal, in Protestant countries or in 'mixed' regions it was either not promulgated at all or came into force only in particular Catholic enclaves (Haring, 1965; de Bhaldriathe, 1971).

In Ireland, Tametsi was promulgated soon after Trent in the two northernmost ecclesiastical provinces of Armagh and Tuam. Its provisions were extended to the third province, Cashel, in 1775 and to the remaining province Leinster in 1778. Meanwhile Benedict XIV, in 1741 had decreed that Tametsi was to be taken as not affecting mixed

marriages in Belgium and Holland, and this declaration, the effect of which was to recognize as valid mixed marriages not celebrated before a Catholic priest, was extended to Ireland in a papal rescript of Pius VI dated 19 March 1785 (Barritt and Carter, Parliamentary Papers 1854-5).

The exclusion of mixed marriages from the requirement of being celebrated according to the canonical form had a particular advantage for the Catholic Church in Ireland, in that it provided a way of avoiding a point of conflict with the civil law. Although a marriage of two Catholics performed by a Catholic priest was considered to be civilly valid, this was not the case if the marriage was a mixed one. "By the Act 12 Geo.I, c.3, marriages between two Protestants, or a Protestant and a Roman Catholic, by a priest or degraded clergyman were declared null and void." (P.P. 1902.) Nevertheless there is some evidence to suggest that mixed marriages celebrated before a Catholic priest were quite common. Giving evidence before a Select Committee on the State of Ireland in 1825, the Reverend Thomas Costello, a Catholic priest from Co. Limerick, observed that mixed marriages "were very frequent even among the lower orders". Furthermore, he maintained that many of his flock did not care to contract a mixed marriage before a Protestant clergyman; "the people", he says,

> are attached to their own religion and are quite unwilling to legalise their marriages with Protestants, by having the rite performed in the Protestant church.

Similarly, the Anglican Archbishop of Dublin stated in evidence that he believed that such civilly invalid marriages were frequently performed, although he argued that this was mainly because the Catholic clergy were particularly eager to assist in their celebration because of the possibilities for proselytism which arose therefrom.

The accuracy of such a charge is, of course, difficult to gauge; nevertheless, the illegality of mixed marriages performed by a

Roman Catholic clergyman had its own particular advantage as far as the Roman Catholic hierarchy was concerned. In 1866, Bishop Moriarty told the Royal Commission on the Laws of Marriage that although he would prefer the law to be repealed so that Catholic priests might be on the same legal footing as their Protestant counterparts,

> ... if I were to consult my own feelings and convenience I should not wish for any change in the law because it is very convenient for me, wishing as I do to prevent such marriages to be able to say to parties seeking our ministration, 'No, the marriage will not be valid in law and I shall be subjected to a severe penalty ...'

In any event the Commission recommended that the law should be changed in this respect, which it was in 1870. The church law, with respect to validity, remained unchanged however until the promulgation of Ne Temere in 1908.

It is important to make use of the phrase 'with respect to validity' in this context because, as we shall see, apart from a brief ruling on the proper form for contracting sponsalia (espousals), Ne Temere did not directly concern itself with any aspect of the church law other than validity. Thus, Ne Temere did not, as some writers (especially Edwards)[1] have claimed, constitute an innovation whereby a couple about to enter a mixed marriage were required to promise to baptize and educate any children of the marriage as Roman Catholics. This requirement in fact dates from the eighteenth century (Connick, 1960; de Bhaldriathe, 1971; Esmein, 1891), though there are reasons to believe that the promises were not always sought in Ireland.

Bishop Doyle, Roman Catholic bishop of Kildare and Leighlin, when asked by the Select Committee on the State of Ireland mentioned earlier whether there were any prohibitions deriving from the Council of Trent on Catholics marrying Protestants replied, correctly for the

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[1] Edwards's somewhat tendentious account of what he calls the 'Marriage Law of 1908' seems to have been derived from a reading of the Code of Canon Law issued in 1917, rather than from the text of Ne Temere.

reasons we have seen, that there had been no legislation on the matter at that Council. He then went on to say that mixed marriages were still regarded as valid in the eyes of the Church even if celebrated before a Protestant minister, and that no censure was incurred by the Catholic party if the children of a mixed marriage were brought up as Protestants. Boyle was quite emphatic on this point; Catholic clergymen, he maintained, only advised, rather than insisted, that the children be brought up as Catholics. Archbishop Murray, Catholic Archbishop of Dublin, on the other hand, conceded that not only did the Catholic Church dislike mixed marriages taking place, but

> whenever we allow them it is always as far as I know with the condition that the children of the marriage are to be educated in the Catholic religion.

Weight is added to this by the evidence of the Reverend Mortimer O'Sullivan, an Anglican clergyman, who testified that he had known cases where the rites of the Catholic Church had been withheld from a Catholic involved in a mixed marriage who had allowed the children of the marriage to be brought up as Protestants. Certainly, Bishop Murray's statement quoted above is hardly unequivocal in contrast to the evidence of his Anglican counterpart who claimed the practice to be widespread,

> ... and in that way very materially, and perhaps principally the number of Roman Catholics has of late years increased, for it hardly ever fails even among the lower orders that the Protestant yields, especially in the case where the Roman Catholic is the female, and the children are with very few exceptions brought up as Roman Catholics.

Clearly though, the promises were not extracted if the marriage was performed by a Protestant clergyman, while Edwards (1970) has suggested that the custom in Ireland in the nineteenth century was rather for the male children of a mixed marriage to be brought up in the father's religion while the girls were brought up to follow the mother's faith. Mortimer O'Sullivan when asked about this particular

practice by the Select Committee replied that he was not familiar with it, adding that he thought it unlikely that the priests would condone it. However, there is evidence to suggest that the practice was known throughout Europe, and that it was even defended by some Catholic theologians, presumably bowing to local custom. Ultimately, though, the practice and its apologists were condemned by Benedict XIV (Connick, 1960). Edwards (1970) argues that the custom of raising boys to follow the father and girls to follow the mother was related in some way to a pattern of hypergamous marriage. As one cannot assume that the social relations between Protestants and Roman Catholics in Ireland were duplicated elsewhere in Europe, this seems not altogether plausible. One can note, however, that such a custom would be consistent with the division of labour in peasant societies and would have the advantage of ensuring the continuity of land inheritance within the religious group.

Whatever the reasons lying behind the custom Edwards describes, O'Sullivan's remark on the likely opposition of the priesthood to the practice seems to be borne out by the statement of the Synod of Thurles in 1850 reminding priests of the necessity of obtaining the promises (de Bhaldriathe, 1971). With the promulgation of Ne Temere, further weight was added to this requirement but in an indirect fashion. Ne Temere made the presence of a priest and two witnesses a necessary condition of the validity of any marriage involving a Catholic:

> Only those marriages are valid which are contracted before the parish priest or Ordinary (bishop) of the place or a priest delegated by either of these, and at least two witnesses ...

Further, and here is the only mention of mixed marriages:

> The same laws are binding on the same Catholics as above, if they contract sponsalia or marriage with non-Catholics baptized or unbaptized, even after a

> dispensation has been obtained from the impediment mixtis religionis or disparitus cultus; unless the Holy See decree otherwise for some particular place or region.[1]
> (P.P. 1912-13, App.XIV.)

The effect of this however was to make obligatory the promises regarding children because, as de Bhaldriathe points out, mixed religion, although an impediment, could not of itself render a marriage invalid. However, a priest would not perform such a marriage until a dispensation from the impediment had been granted, and this a bishop would not do until the promises had been given, "So, in practice, the promises became necessary for validity." (de Bhaldriathe, 1971 - emphasis added).

The aftermath of "Ne Temere" in Ireland: the McCann case

The provisions of Ne Temere had been criticized by the Synod of Bishops of the Church of Ireland soon after its promulgation. The decree made little public impact until 1910, however, when it attained a good deal of notoriety as a result of what became known as the 'McCann case'. The public first became aware of the McCann case in November 1910 when a letter from the Rev. William Corkey, minister of Townsend Street Presbyterian Church in Belfast, was published in the local press. (The text of the letter can be found in Corkey's autobiography (Corkey, 1961, 151).) Mr Corkey's letter concerned the plight of Mrs Agnes McCann, a member of his congregation. Agnes McCann, the letter stated, had married her husband Alexander, a Roman Catholic, in a Presbyterian ceremony some years before Ne Temere came into effect. The couple agreed at the time of their wedding that they should attend their respective churches, and the marriage itself was a happy one. Eventually, however, the letter went on, Mr McCann's priest came to the house and told the couple that the marriage was invalid as a result of the change in canon law brought about by Ne Temere. Mr McCann asked his

[1] Mixtis religionis is the marital impediment involved in a proposed marriage between a Catholic and a baptized non-Catholic. Where the non-Catholic has not been baptized the impediment is one of disparitus cultus. (It is possible to give a number of sources for the text of Ne Temere but today the XIVth Appendix to the Report of the Royal Commission on Divorce, 1912-13 is likely to be the most convenient place to find the official

wife to remarry in a Catholic ceremony and when she refused began to ill treat her. Some time after he then deserted her, taking with him the couple's two children and, later, all of their furniture. The priest, who regarded Mrs McCann as having been living in sin, would do nothing to help her, leaving her destitute and without her children.

Much of what followed is usefully summarized by Corkey himself in two published accounts of his role in the affair: the one in a pamphlet (Corkey, 1911) produced by the Edinburgh Knox Club at the height of the controversy, in which is reproduced his address to a protest meeting in Edinburgh,[1] and the other in a chapter of his autobiography written many years later (Corkey, 1961). Despite the gap of fifty years the latter is especially valuable since it lists those who spoke at the major protest meetings and records their contributions, apparently on the basis of minutes taken at the time.

As he records, Protestant opinion in Ireland was incensed by the revelations contained in Mr Corkey's letter. Soon after it appeared a special meeting of the Belfast Presbytery was held at which a committee was established to support Mrs McCann, to publicise her case and to help her obtain redress. In a short time the committee had organized a large-scale protest meeting in Belfast at which were represented all the major Protestant denominations in Ireland. Similar protest meetings were soon held in Dublin, Edinburgh, at three venues in London and in a number of other towns and cities. At the same time, Mrs McCann was advised to appeal to the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland to initiate a police search for her children. When the Lord Lieutenant refused to intervene in what he regarded as a civil matter the affair was raised in the House of Commons by a Unionist member for Dublin University, J. H. Campbell (later Lord Glenavy) and in the Lords by

[1] Corkey had many ties to Edinburgh. His mother had been born in the city and he had studied Divinity at Edinburgh University.

Lord Donoughmore. What had begun as a domestic imbroglio very quickly became what Cohen has termed a moral panic.

The McCann case as a moral panic

Moral panics can be thought of as collective expressions of moral indignation which arise when a "condition, episode, person or group of persons emerge to become defined as a threat to societal values and interests" (Cohen, 1972, 9). Tracing societal reactions to the Mods and Rockers phenomenon of the 1960s, Cohen notes that such expressions of indignation become generated on the basis of an account or 'inventory' of what has happened whose source in the media or in the 'moral enterprise' (Becker, 1963) of particular individuals is not usually a disinterested one. The novel or previously unnoticed social phenomenon comes to widespread public attention in circumstances where pressures to ensure newsworthiness or to gain a sympathetic public hearing produce a tendency for matters to be presented in a stylized and dramatic way. Typically, when this happens particular aspects or elements of the situation, like the clothing styles of the Mods and Rockers, are singled out for negative symbolization. This in turn serves as a basis for labelling those to whom the symbols may be attached as deviant and in need of sanction.

The bringing into being of an inventory which highlights an apparently serious and problematic new development gives rise, Cohen suggests, to a public concern both for interpretation and for control. At this stage, therefore, the attention focussed on the inventory begins to lessen. The concern now is, on the one hand, to assimilate the object of the moral panic into a pre-existing interpretive schema which makes sense of what has happened, and, on the other, to do something about it. Explanations and prognostications concerning the nature,

causes and likely effects of the new phenomenon, and which allow its evaluation in terms of dominant values, are now developed to add to the stock of negative imagery and stereotype already in existence.

Normally, it is at this juncture, too, that the apparent ineffectiveness of existing social controls to deal with the emergent phenomenon is revealed. Further and more effective social control is sought through calls for the strengthening of existing control measures and through the increased intervention of control agencies targeted on those social types already marked out by negative symbolization.

The final outcome of the moral panic depends, in Cohen's view, on what results from this enhanced control effort. In the case of the Mods and Rockers, for example, intensive social control was actually effective in extinguishing the behaviour which led initially to the moral panic. An alternative possibility, however, is that the original deviance becomes 'amplified' as those marked out by the moral panic develop sub-cultural forms organized around the contingencies produced through the application of social control (cf. Young, 1971). The legacy of the moral panic in this case is the permanent inclusion of a new social type in society's catalogue of folk-devils.

One difficulty with Cohen's model is that it depends for its effectiveness on an ironic comparison in which the exaggerated and stylized reaction to an event can be checked against 'what actually happened'. That Cohen was able to do precisely this in his study of the Mods and Rockers adds considerably to the persuasiveness of his argument. Such a comparison is, of course, much more difficult to accomplish with non-contemporary material and in situations such as the McCann case where, as described later, one of the groups had - unlike the Mods and Rockers - the power and the interest to develop

and propagate a counter-inventory of what had happened.

On the facts available it is not possible to say whether or not Mr Corkey's account of Mrs McCann's tribulations was distorted or exaggerated. One, of course, cannot doubt Mr Corkey's sincerity, though it is likely that even if there was no conscious exaggeration he would undoubtedly have wanted to put the situation in which Mrs McCann found herself in the best possible light. What is clear is that the alleged source of Mrs McCann's plight - the decree Ne Temere - and its perpetrator, the Roman Catholic Church, were soon seen in a negative, stereotypical and even lurid way.

What had happened to Mrs McCann was almost invariably interpreted on the basis of an assertion that the Catholic Church was an aggressively domineering institution. This view, for example, was forcefully put by one of Corkey's presbytery colleagues who, in proposing a motion of support for Mrs McCann, declared "the claim of that church always has been to control the individual, the home, the school, the nation" (Corkey, 1961, 154). In this light the decree Ne Temere was seen to represent an attempt by the Catholic Church to extend its domination. The McCanns were legally married in British law. By declaring the marriage null and void as a result of the decree the Catholic Church, the argument went, was trying to undermine that law. As Corkey (1911, 15) put it in Edinburgh,

> This decree challenges the supremacy of British Law. I hold in my hand a marriage certificate bearing the seal of the British Empire, and recording the marriage of Alexander McCann and Agnes Jane Barclay. This certificate declares that, according to the law of Britain, these two are husband and wife. This Papal decree says their marriage is "no marriage at all". Which law is going to be supreme in Great Britain?

From the Protestant point of view, there was in this challenge

an additional and sinister significance. The Pope was both head of the Roman Catholic Church and the ruler of a sovereign state, making the Catholic Church both religious body and foreign power. In consequence, the operation of Ne Temere could be seen as advancing the interests of that foreign power to the detriment of the rights and privileges due to the population of Ireland as subjects of the British Crown.

An argument of this kind gave the opponents of the decree an opportunity they were not slow to exploit to appeal to xenophobia and to Empire loyalism. Speaking at Dublin, J. H. Campbell called the promulgation of the Ne Temere "an act of intolerable aggression by a foreign power" (Corkey, 1961, 164). The audience at the protest meeting in Belfast were asked by Dr Crozier, the Church of Ireland bishop of Down, Connor and Dromore, whether the sacred vows of marriage "are to be repudiated at the bidding of a foreign Pontiff" and heard the Moderator of the General Assembly of Ireland, Rev. Dr J. H. Murphy, tell them to "demand that the benefits and securities which we enjoy as British subjects under British law shall not be stolen from us by any self-constituted ecclesiastical tyranny" (Corkey, 1961, 157).

Along with the challenge it was said to pose to the civil liberties of British subjects, Ne Temere was also regarded as a threat to the home. The motion condemning the decree at the protest meeting held in Belfast, for example, described Ne Temere as "a direct incentive to the breach of the marriage vow" (Corkey, 1961, 158). Corkey, too, skilfully combined the threat to the family with the themes of Empire and foreign domination in his address to the Edinburgh meeting. Ne Temere, he claimed (1911, 14), was a danger to the Commonwealth "because it strikes at the home", and he went on,

> It will affect the peace and harmony of thousands of homes. We believe with Lord Rosebery that "the

> roots of empire are in the home," and if the decree of a foreign power can come into a free British home and break it up, that decree becomes a menace to the State.

Having developed an account of what had happened and an interpretation of its origins and implications based on ideas about the domineering intent of the Catholic Church and the machinations of the Pope as the leader of a foreign power, Protestants were still faced with the task of taking effective action against the decree. In accounting for the transition from interpretation to remedy in the case of the Mods and Rockers, Cohen (1972, Ch.4) points to the importance of two elements: 'sensitization' and the character of what he calls the 'official control culture'. Sensitization refers to the development of a perception that the novel social phenomenon causing concern is not an isolated instance but is in reality all around, while the 'official control culture' may be thought of as the norms, values and working practices of the official agents of social control. Cohen notes that such agents were quickly and decisively mobilized against the Mods and Rockers because of the congruence between the official control culture and the conventional stereotypes which the Mods and Rockers evoked.

Protestant opinion in Ireland very quickly became sensitized to the operation of Ne Temere. Commentators hostile to the decree indeed took pains to stress that the McCann case was not a single, isolated incident. Many of those who spoke at public meetings, including Corkey himself, indicated that they had at least indirect knowledge of other cases. Dr Irwin, for example, told the Presbytery meeting that he "could add to Mr Corkey's story one from his own experience". One of the speakers at the Belfast protest meeting had received a communication earlier in the day from "a well-informed observer in

Co. Down that two cases of practically the same procedure had taken place in a well-known locality there" (Corkey, 1961, 160), while the Archbishop of Dublin was able to tell the audience at the protest meeting in the city that he too had had a further case brought to his attention. His colleague, the Archdeacon of Ferns, managed neatly to stress the impact of the decree while mitigating any possible charge that additional cases were few in number. In his view many people were suffering because of Ne Temere but these cases did not come to light because those involved were afraid to come forward.

A rash of cases similar to the McCann's was in fact reported at the time, including a number in England, and a year later cases on the McCann model, such as that involving the alleged abduction of the daughters of a mixed marriage in Kilmurray, Co. Cork, were still to be seen in the Press. One suspects that an element of exaggeration was at work here since many of the reports were at second hand. Further, it is not of course impossible that what was being produced was a self-fulfilling prophecy. The publicity surrounding the McCann case may have encouraged Catholic clergy to seek out those affected retrospectively by the decree with more diligence than they might otherwise have done on a simple reading of the original promulgation with its emphasis on sponsalia.

The result of a self-fulfilling prophecy or not, the threat posed by Ne Temere was clearly apparent, at least in Protestant eyes. Moves to deal with that threat, however, were much less readily forthcoming than the campaigners could have wished, in the first instance because conditions existed which permitted a challenge to the whole basis upon which the moral panic had been developed.

The ability of a group to resist attempts at stigmatization

and the application of punitive sanctions lies in its size, level of organization and relative power (Lofland, 1969, 13-15). If one takes the Mods and Rockers, for example, it is clear that they were in relative terms small in number and almost completely lacking in any real organizational structure. In common with other young people they had little in the way of economic or political power with which to exercise any countervailing influence over the control apparatus, nor did they possess means to propagate information which might have modified or falsified the negative and largely exaggerated stereotypes of them which were being propounded. Indeed, to the contrary, where Mods and Rockers did have direct access to the media it was in contrived situations which could be exploited to justify further the worst fears upon which the moral panic had been based (Cohen, 1972, 140-141).

Catholics in Ireland in the period of the McCann case, on the other hand, formed, as they still do, a sizable and well-organized group with their own representatives and with access to the media. It was thus possible for Catholic opinion-leaders to offer a counter-inventory of what had happened and a counter-interpretation of why the McCann case had come to the public view. In this situation the universality of condemnation of the kind which greeted the Mods and the Rockers and the interpenetration of conventional stereotypes and the official control culture was much less likely to emerge. Instead the expression of moral indignation became co-extensive with pre-existing lines of social and political differentiation. The decree Ne Temere and its alleged consequences became no longer the object solely of a crusade but of a controversy.

The Catholic counter-inventory with its attendant counter-interpretation are most concisely found in the replies made by Nationalist MPs when the McCann case was raised in the House of Commons.

Joseph Devlin, MP for West Belfast, produced a letter in the House which he claimed was from Alexander McCann. As read later in the debate by John Dillon, this described the McCanns' marriage as having been unhappy. It had been beset by difficulties produced, it was said, by Mrs McCann's aggressiveness and her interference with the practice of Mr McCann's religion. As the letter put it (House of Commons, col.193):

> ... there was never a day passed without a dispute. For instance, she would have meat ready for me on Fridays. She would put back the clock and make me late for Mass. She ridiculed the priest and religions cursed the Pope and sang hymns all day

Mr McCann had left, the letter said, because he had found the situation intolerable. He specifically denied however that his priest had ever urged him to desert his wife.

Devlin further claimed to know the real significance behind the McCann case. During his campaign, he alleged, posters had gone up in his constituency which said, "Will you vote for Devlin and have your Protestant children kidnapped by the Priest?" In his view the whole affair had been manipulated quite simply and cynically for political ends.

Added weight was given to this position in Nationalist eyes by an important weakness in Mrs McCann's story. She consistently maintained she did not know the name of the priest who had visited the home with news of the retrospective effect of Ne Temere. Devlin produced statements from the priests in McCann's parish denying all of Mrs McCann's charges and threatening legal action against anyone who named any of them publicly as being the priest in the case. Protestant reluctance to take up this challenge was taken as evidence of the unsoundness of their case.

Given the existence of inventory and counter-inventory, interpretation and counter-interpretation, the response of the official control apparatus to a moral panic becomes problematic. In this situation the obtaining of an authoritative resolution to a controversy lies, it is probably not too cynical to suggest, in the relative power of each faction to align the official control structure to its version of the affair. The juncture at which the McCann case took place put Protestants at a disadvantage in this regard. Since 1908 (ironically the year in which Ne Temere had been promulgated) the support of the Irish Nationalists at Westminster had allowed the Liberal Government to remain in office, an advantageous parliamentary position for the Nationalists which had been enhanced by the General Election of December 1910 (Lyons, 1973, 269). The government of the day was therefore relatively unsusceptible to pressure identified with the Unionist cause.

Even despite the large-scale protest campaign which had been waged against Ne Temere and the evident feeling which the issue had aroused among Protestants, the government did not retreat from the position originally taken by the Lord Lieutenant. Birrell, the Chief Secretary for Ireland, reiterated in the House of Commons that the matter was a civil one over which the authorities had no direct jurisdiction and affirmed that, although the police had been permitted to try to establish Mr McCann's whereabouts, the Crown authorities were refusing to become any more deeply involved in the case.

Birrell's speech to the House of Commons actually supplies an example of the way in which the official control culture can be used to thwart attempts to mobilize the official control structure in support of a moral panic. In it he identifies the issue as being largely concerned with the specific plight of Mrs McCann. Not only

did this avoid the wider issues which the decree undoubtedly raised but it was an attempt to encourage the view that a strict adherence to existing legal norms was sufficient to deal with the problem which had arisen. Birrell argued that Mrs McCann could have obtained speedy and effective redress by an application to the Court of Chancery. Since Mrs McCann's advisers had not recommended to her this simple remedy but had preferred instead the more public and politically more useful device of an appeal to the Lord Lieutenant they stood condemned, Birrell contended, of putting political expedience before Mrs McCann's best interests (House of Commons, cols.161-163). The campaign against Ne Temere was therefore merely a manoeuvre by Unionists to whip up feeling against Home Rule and in this light was not to be taken as a genuine basis for concern about the decree.

Consequences of the McCann case

In the short term it appears then as if those who opposed Ne Temere were on the whole unsuccessful in dealing with the effects of the decree. In the case of Mrs McCann herself this was noticeably so, for although donations from well-wishers and the proceeds of collections at protest meetings saved her from destitution, she remained unable to recover her children.[1] Moreover, there seems never to have been any prospect that the furore over the McCann case would lead to the withdrawal or modification of the decree or that it was damaging to British relations with the Holy See. Because it did not result in an alignment of the authorities with those who opposed Ne Temere, the wave of moral indignation aroused by the McCann case must be thought of as a failed moral panic.

By other criteria, however, the moral panic induced by the McCann case might be judged a success. As Becker (1963),

[1] It seems that in later years Mrs McCann divorced her husband and remarried. An attempt was made to trace her in order to interview her about the case, but she proved to have died a few years earlier.

Cohen (1972, 139-143) and others point out, those engaged in moral enterprise have often in fact a vested interest in the continued existence of that which they decry. Certainly, had the McCanns' domestic difficulties been successfully resolved or the impact of the decree been lessened by government action or a change of heart at the Vatican, the case would not have served the Unionist cause nearly so well as it in fact did.

This was so for two reasons. The first was that the promulgation and enforcement of Ne Temere were seen as actions which decisively marked off the Catholic Church from other Christian bodies. The judgment of the Presbyterian minister who seconded the resolutions put forward at the protest meeting in Belfast was emphatic, for example: "Between all forms of Protestantism represented on this platform tonight and Romanism there is a dark gulf fixed" (Corkey, 1961, 160). Now, this was partly based on the recognition that the decree put into question the validity of all marriage rites performed by non-Roman Catholic clergy. If a marriage performed before a Protestant minister was null and void because one of the partners was a Roman Catholic, was not a marriage between two Protestants which used exactly the same form also invalid? Partly, however, the distinction between Catholics and Protestants was also tacitly drawn on the basis of Protestant moral superiority. Only the Roman Catholic Church, it was implied, was capable of the kind of action Ne Temere had produced, the dismemberment of a family and the robbing of her children from a mother. "The spirit that could break up a happy home", said Dr Murphy, "... is capable of any enormity" (Corkey, 1961, 157), while Corkey rather dramatically announced, "the men that would defend this cruel deed would burn (Protestants) if they had the power." Ne Temere was, as J. M. Barkley (1972) points out, the first occasion on which all

of the Protestant Churches in Ireland took joint and concerted action to preserve their interests. It is likely that the sense of moral superiority which the campaign engendered was also an important element in the forging of a supra-denominational identity among non-Roman Catholics in Ulster.

Secondly, Protestants became convinced that Ne Temere was a foretaste of what might be expected if Home Rule were to be granted to an Ireland in which control would be in the hands of a Catholic Nationalist party. (For reviews of the period, see Stewart (1967) and Lyons (1973).) Never expressed openly at the protest meetings which were proclaimed to be non-political (see, for example, Corkey's opening remarks at Edinburgh (1911, 3)), the point was nevertheless made explicit by Unionist politicians and the Press. Said Campbell in the House, for example,

> At least this case of Mrs McCann is a solemn warning to those of us in Ireland who feared such results (of Nationalist control in Ireland) and I can assure this house that it has strengthened the unalterable determination of Loyalists and Protestants in the country ... to retain what they believe to be the only guarantee for the continued enjoyment of their civil rights ... (H.C., 1911, v.31, col.158),

while the Northern Whig put the argument in a somewhat blunter fashion:

> The case sheds a flood of light upon what would happen if the Church of Rome were to be established in Ireland, as under Home Rule it would be. (6 Jan., 1911.)

To quote Barkley again:

> The prominence of the Ne Temere decree and the McCann case in the speeches of the period and in Presbytery discussions points to this being the reason for the switch to almost total opposition to Home Rule. The vote (at the General Assemby) being 921 against and 43 for - a very different situation from that twenty years earlier.

Apart from its political impact the McCann case had consequences

for those in subsequent years who contemplated a Protestant-Catholic marriage. In the first place, although there is no direct evidence with which to support the proposition, it is likely that in the wake of the publicity surrounding the McCann case social control of religious intermarriage was intensified. Protestant parents seeking to dissuade a son or daughter from marriage with a Roman Catholic now had, in the McCann case, a powerful cautionary tale while Catholic priests, to echo a point made earlier, were now alerted to the necessity for ensuring that 'mixed' marriage took place in a Catholic ceremony. Secondly, a Catholic-Protestant couple wishing to marry could no longer leave the site of the ceremony to custom or to personal preference. Instead they faced decisions about the formal validation of their relationship as a major contingency in courtship and with the prospect, whatever their decision, of displeasing one side or the other. As is shown later, in this respect the impact of the Ne Temere decree and of the Protestant reaction generated by the McCann case retain a contemporary significance.

Subsequent developments

With the advent of the First World War the controversy over the McCann case died away. In 1917, the canon law of the Catholic Church was codified into the Code of Canon Law. Under the Code the terms of the decree Ne Temere were made universal. The Catholic Church would without exception in the West only recognize as valid a marriage involving a Catholic if it were actually performed before a Roman Catholic priest. Additionally, for a Catholic-Protestant couple to be married in this fashion it was also necessary for them to apply, through the priest to the local Catholic bishop, for a dispensation "from the impediment of mixed religion". A normal requirement for the

granting of this dispensation was that an undertaking be made in writing by both partners concerning the Catholic upbringing of any children of the marriage, and an obligation was placed on the Catholic partner to work for the conversion of the non-Catholic spouse.

After the First World War the attentions of Protestants in Ulster were of course focussed on more momentous issues and it was not until the early 1950s that Protestant opinion was again inflamed, this time by the 'Tilson Case'. In this case, which involved a Protestant father taking children away from a Catholic mother, a High Court judge in Dublin ruled that due to the special constitutional position of the Catholic Church in the Republic of Ireland, the ante-nuptial agreement concerning the children of a mixed marriage was binding in Irish law. For Unionists, this was seen as further evidence that the Irish Republic was a theocratic state (Whyte, 1971), but the affair did not generate nearly as much controversy as the McCann case had twenty years earlier, quite possibly because when the decision was confirmed on appeal different grounds were offered, this time not stressing the constitutional position of the Catholic Church (Harrison, 1951). (Even so, one of the Appeal judges, a Protestant, dissented - Whyte, 1971.)

The sixties, however, brought the pontificate of John XXIII, and a certain liberality began to inform many areas of Catholic legislation. With regard to mixed marriages, the new thinking is set out in the Motu Proprio of Paul VI entitled Matrimonia Mixta, published in March, 1970 (Episcopal Conference for England and Wales, 1970). The Motu Proprio takes, within limits, a consistently more liberal line than had been the case previously. Canon 1060 of the Code of Canon Law had summed up the old attitude,

> The Church everywhere forbids most severely marriage between two baptized persons, one of whom is a Catholic, and the other an adherent of a heretical or schismatical sect ... (Codex Iuris Canonicis)

Now the word 'forbidden' is nowhere to be found; instead "... the Church, conscious of her duty, discourages the contracting of mixed marriages". Furthermore the whole tone of the document is more ecumenically oriented. Mixed marriages are a problem, says the Motu Proprio because "they do not except in some cases, help in re-establishing unity among Christians". Matrimonia Mixta further allowed national Episcopal Conferences to have a much wider say in the regulation of mixed marriages than had previously been the case.

Under new regulations which were introduced in Ireland following the Motu Proprio, the undertaking concerning the Catholic upbringing of children was required only from the Catholic partner with the Protestant partner merely acknowledging his or her recognition of the obligation placed on the Catholic spouse by the Church. The Catholic party must also declare an intention to try to remain steadfast in the Catholic faith and the priest must satisfy himself that the indissolubility of the marriage is "not being excluded by either party ..." Following the changed regulations in 1970 it also became possible for a couple to obtain a dispensation "from the canonical form" which allowed for the possibility, within certain limits, of participation in the ceremony by a Protestant minister.

These regulations form one of the subjects for discussion at regular meetings of the Bishops' Conference of the Roman Catholic Church in Ireland and the Irish Council of Churches. The Protestant side, while welcoming the liberalization of Catholic canon law on 'mixed' marriages, has nevertheless argued that the Irish Bishops' stance on the topic is more conservative in spirit than the Motu Proprio itself. It has further been contended that this conservatism is seen to be even more pronounced when compared to some of the

proposals made by Roman Catholic Episcopal Conferences elsewhere in Europe,[1] while in addition, the charge has been made that in some Catholic dioceses the new regulations remain in any case unimplemented. The Catholic side has taken the position that the changes made are in line with the Motu Proprio and that while ecumenical relations may be hampered by the regulations as they still exist, these represent the furthest that it was possible for the hierarchy to go consistent with the Roman Catholic ecclesiological tradition. A mutually acceptable solution to the differences between the two sides remains still to emerge.

[1] For a survey of such proposals, see Ecumenical Notes and Documentation (1971).

## Chapter 6 Intermarriage and Pre-marital Residential Location in Belfast

In the present chapter patterns of access to potential partners having a different religious background are considered by examining marriage patterns in relation to the territorial segregation of Catholics and Protestants in Belfast.

A pattern of physical separation in the form of residential segregation along religious lines has been a feature of city life in Belfast for at least a century (Boyle, 1967, 132). The precise specification of that pattern, though, owes much to the work of Emrys Jones (1960, cp 13) who, from a detailed study of the 1951 census returns of religious affiliation by enumeration district, was able to derive a series of maps showing the spatial distribution of the major religious denominations in Belfast. From this Jones was then able to demonstrate how Roman Catholics tended to cluster in particular social regions within the city, notably to the west along the Falls Road, and in isolated pockets, to the north around Ardoyne, in the York Street area, and in Cromac to the east.

Jones's work on religious segregation in Belfast has been taken up in somewhat more detail by F. W. Boal, who has explored the topic in a series of articles (Boal 1969, 1970, 1971, 1972; Boal and Poole 1973). Especially noteworthy is the first of these, Boal's (1969) study of the 'Shankill-Falls Divide' in Belfast, where through detailed empirical research Boal is able to build up an entirely persuasive picture of the social separation of two neighbouring but religiously different neighbourhoods in West Belfast.

Boal's work here is of additional interest because he provides

direct evidence of the relationship between physical separation and marriage by finding that (1969, 46-47):

> ... out of a sample of 79 couples in Clonard only one had marriage partner locational links to the Shankill sector while out of 117 couples in Shankill I, none had marriage partner links with the general Falls sector.[1]

Now an obvious limitation of relying, as Boal does here, on premarital location data is that the actual decision-making that goes into mate selection or rejection is lost. Accordingly, it had originally been intended to study courtship practices in Belfast through a sample survey which would have attempted in part to gather information on how the city is actually perceived and used in the search for a marriage partner. As it happens, and for reasons explained elsewhere, such an approach did not prove feasible. It was necessary instead to adopt a methodology similar to Boal's by focussing on a relatively small area and making use, again, of premarital address data.

However, the area which it proved possible to study - a Roman Catholic parish in Belfast which is called here 'St. Christopher's - differs from Boal's study area in a number of ways. First, it has for many years tended to be a Catholic enclave in a largely Protestant area, unlike, for example, the Clonard area mentioned earlier which has a large, religiously homogeneous 'hinterland'. Second, data are drawn from parish records which allow one to distinguish between mixed and unmixed couples. Third, it has been possible to compare a pre-'troubles' period with the year following the outbreak of serious civil disorder in Northern Ireland. What follows, then, is a case study relating to the spatial origins of homogamous and heterogamous couples marrying in one Roman Catholic church in Belfast in 1966-67 and 1970.

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[1] Clonard and Falls are overwhelmingly Catholic areas. Shankill and Shankill I are Protestant.

St. Christopher's - a case study in pre-marital location

As a first step, an attempt was made to assess the extent of pre-marital residential propinquity exhibited by couples married in St. Christopher's parish church during the period 1966-67, and during the year 1970. For this purpose pre-nuptial addresses were made available from the parish records, and each address was assigned X and Y co-ordinates determined by reference to a detailed city map which had been overlaid by a fine grid. (Cases involving servicemen or where one or both partners had an address outside the city were excluded.) Using a computer, the distance between the pre-marital residence of each bride and groom was calculated, by Pythagoras, from the co-ordinates given.[1] Resulting propinquity distributions are shown in Table 10.

TABLE 10

Distribution of pre-marital residential propinquity for couples married in 'St. Christopher's' parish church; 1966-67 and 1970

| Distance (in miles) | 1966-67 | | | 1970 | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | No. of Couples | % | Cumulative % | No. of Couples | % | Cumulative % |
| 0.00-0.49 | 76 | 37.2 | 37.2 | 48 | 47.5 | 47.5 |
| 0.50-0.99 | 25 | 12.3 | 49.5 | 9 | 8.9 | 56.4 |
| 1.00-1.49 | 49 | 24.0 | 73.9 | 11 | 10.9 | 67.3 |
| 1.50-1.99 | 22 | 10.8 | 84.4 | 12 | 11.9 | 79.2 |
| 2.00-2.49 | 13 | 6.4 | 90.7 | 6 | 5.9 | 85.1 |
| 2.50-2.99 | 8 | 3.9 | 94.6 | 6 | 5.9 | 91.1 |
| 3.00-3.99 | 10 | 4.9 | 99.5 | 7 | 6.9 | 98.0 |
| 4.00 + | 1 | 0.5 | 100.0 | 2 | 2.0 | 100.0 |
| Totals | 204 | 100.0 | | 101 | 100.0 | |

[1] This method seems to have been first suggested by Rogoff (1966).

The first thing to notice about these distributions is that they are both bi-modal. In each case, while a sizable number of marriage partners lived less than half-a-mile from each other before their marriage, the next largest group of mates is to be found at between 1 and 1½ miles in 1966-67, and between 1½ and 2 miles in 1970. In each time period relatively small numbers of marriage linkages were between half-a-mile and 1 mile. One obvious possibility here is that as St. Christopher's is a Catholic enclave in an otherwise Protestant area, its residents prefer not to marry into the surrounding districts. However, to specify whether this is in fact the case, it becomes necessary to consider directly how brides and grooms are actually distributed in the two-dimensional space represented by the map. This done, some indicator of religious segregation might then be introduced and the patterns obtained compared.

The first operation is simply performed by Grouping X and Y co-ordinates into classes and then asking the computer to cross-tabulate for brides and grooms respectively. (For convenience, class-widths are set at 50 units in order to encompass the study area, more or less, within one cell.) As it happens, the distributions for brides suggest simply a high degree of conformity to the custom of "marrying in the bride's church". In 1966-67, for instance, 77.45% of brides married in St. Christopher's parish church lived within the study area. In 1970, the figure stands at 70.30%. Attention has therefore been concentrated on the percentage distributions of grooms in the map-space. These distributions are shown in Tables 11 and 12. On both axes, each 50-unit increment is designated by a letter, and introduced into the table is an admittedly crude measure of religious segregation. In the Boal study, a number of indicators of religious segregation were used: street decorations, newspaper readership,

support for certain football teams and so on. Our measure is based on the siting of Catholic elementary schools. As we shall note elsewhere, the Catholic hierarchy in Ireland has made strenuous efforts to ensure a separate Catholic education system in Northern Ireland. On the assumption that children of elementary school age will not be required to travel far to school, the dispersal of Catholic elementary schools should reflect the dispersal of the Catholic population in the city. Those cells where the proportion of Catholic elementary schools equals or exceeds that of State or Protestant denominational elementary schools are marked by an asterisk. (The study area is indicated by underlining.)

TABLE 11

Cross-tabulation of X co-ordinates by Y co-ordinates: Percentage Distribution of Pre-marital Locations for Grooms married in 'St. Christopher's', 1966-67

| | A | B | C | D | E | F | G | H | I | J |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| A | | 0.5 | | | | | | | | |
| B | 1.5 | | 1.5* | 1.0 | | | 2.5 | | | |
| C | | 1.5* | 2.9* | 2.5* | | 1.0 | 2.0 | | | |
| D | | | 1.5 | 3.4 | 2.0 | 38.2* | 0.5 | | | |
| E | | | 0.5 | 11.8* | 2.9 | 5.8 | | | | |
| F | 0.5 | 0.5 | 0.5 | 1.5* | 3.9 | 2.0* | | 1.0* | 1.0 | 1.0 |
| G | * | * | 1.5 | 1.0 | 0.5 | | | | | |
| H | 1.0 | 1.0 | 0.5 | | | | | | | |
| I | | | | 0.5 | | | | | | |
| J | | 0.5 | | | | | | | | |

TABLE 12

Cross-tabulation of X co-ordinates by Y co-ordinates: Percentage Distribution of Pre-marital Locations for Grooms married in 'St. Christopher's', 1970

| | A | B | C | D | E | F | G | H | I | J |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| A | | | | | | | | | | |
| B | 1.0 | | 3.0* | 1.0 | | 2.0 | | | | |
| C | | 1.0* | 2.0* | 1.0* | 3.0 | | 4.0 | | | |
| D | 1.0 | | 1.0 | 3.0* | | 47.0* | 2.0 | | | |
| E | | 1.0 | | 1.0* | 1.0 | 5.0 | | | | |
| F | | 1.0 | 1.0 | | 4.0 | * | 1.0 | * | | |
| G | * | * | | 2.0 | 1.0 | | | | | |
| H | 1.0 | | 2.0 | 2.0 | | | | | | |
| I | | | 1.0 | | | | | | | |
| J | | | 1.0 | | | | | | | |
| K | | | 1.0 | | | | | | | |

On inspection, the patterns that emerge from these two tables seem to be as follows:

(a) In both periods the relatively large proportion of grooms who resided within the study area, taken with the even higher proportion of brides mentioned earlier, would suggest a substantial amount of territorial endogamy.

(b) In the 1966-67 period a noticeable number of grooms appear to be drawn from an area to the west of the study area, which according to the crude measure of religious segregation is a Catholic area. By contrast, one finds something of a paucity of grooms in the intermediate area (column E) which is not so designated.

(c) The year 1970 exhibits a greater concentration of grooms within the study area, but also, apparently, somewhat more scatter outside it. In particular the previously mentioned concentration of grooms to the west appears to be somewhat attenuated.

Catton and Smirich (1964, 528), in their assessment of the effect of residential propinquity on mate selection, have argued strongly that,

> Distance gradients in patterns of human interaction may be plausibly interpreted as representing economy of time and energy, rather than either competition between distant and intervening opportunities or norms reflected in ecological segregation.

Here, quite clearly, though, is a case where such a formulation is inappropriate. If Catton and Smirich are correct, then for any given small area the major constraints on marrying into adjoining areas will merely take the form of interstitial obstacles, non-residential land, for example, railways or canals. In this case, though, contiguous areas are avoided, dispersed territorial segments are linked, and here it seems, as on the Shankill-Falls Divide, simple territorial segregation, even as measured by a crude indicator, has its counterpart in the segregation of an activity - courtship.

At the same time it might be possible to overstate the case. After all, grooms in Tables 11 and 12 are to be found over much of the map-space, not just in the clearly Catholic areas, and we have yet to consider the actual distribution of intermarrying pairs.

In fact, the actual numbers of intermarrying couples found in both our time periods is small. However, the year 1970 shows a percentage increase in Protestant-Catholic marriages over 1966-67. In the earlier period, out of 204 marriages performed in the parish only 20 or 9.8% were mixed. For 1970, there were 18 Catholic-Protestant couples out of a marriage total of 101, i.e. 17.8%, almost double. This might perhaps be unexpected given the onset of serious civil disorder in Belfast in 1969 but it is, of course, in line with figures presented earlier.

Now, given the smaller numbers here, one can specify more precisely the religious compositions of the locales from which intermarrying spouses come and display graphically the various patterns found. (In other words, one is able to show how particular kinds of linkages rather than individuals are distributed in the two-dimensional space.) Such a procedure, of course, is not without its hazards. The small numbers involved make for ease of graphical presentation but may also allow a sensitivity to chance spatial and temporal variations. A reliance on visual inspection may encourage a tendency to invest patterns and configuration with a significance they do not possess. What is known of the residential patternings of religious groups in Belfast is still somewhat incomplete and affected by the population movements the 'troubles' in Northern Ireland have brought in their wake. As a result, one must stress the tentative nature of much of what follows.

For clarity, three sets of linkages between intermarrying partners have been distinguished. For each time period, we look at (i) those distributions of linkages wholly within the study area, (ii) linkages between the study area and the rest of the city, and (iii) cases where the linkages occur between individuals neither of whom was living in the study area at the time of marriage. Additionally, an attempt has been made to designate each premarital location according to whether it was found in a 'Catholic', a 'Protestant', or a 'mixed' street.[1]

Figures 1 and 2 show for the two time periods linkage configurations wholly within the study area.

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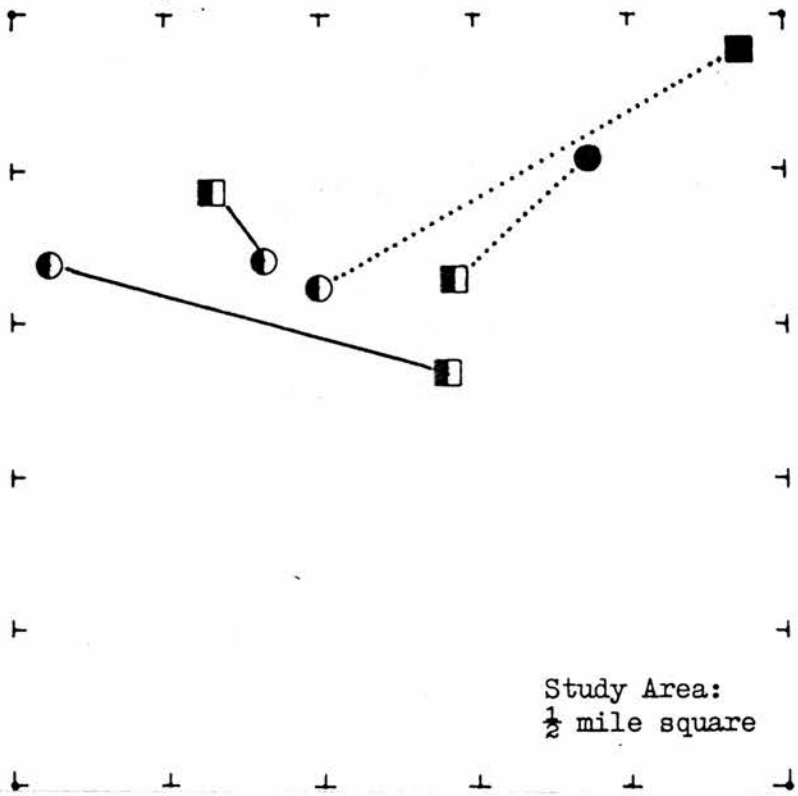
[1]This was done on an admittedly arbitrary basis. Within the study area itself, a judgment as to the religious composition of each street was made by a knowledgeable local resident. For the remaining locations recourse was had to a variety of sources, primarily the maps reproduced in Poole and Boal (1973) and material on housing movements emanating from the Northern Ireland Community Relations Commission (Black, 1972; Darby and Morris, 1973).

FIGURE 1

Catholic-Protestant Couples married in 'St.Christopher's', 1966-67; Marriage-partner Locational Links within the Study Area only




KEY

Linkages

Catholic - Catholic

Catholic - Protestant

Catholic - Mixed

Protestant - Mixed

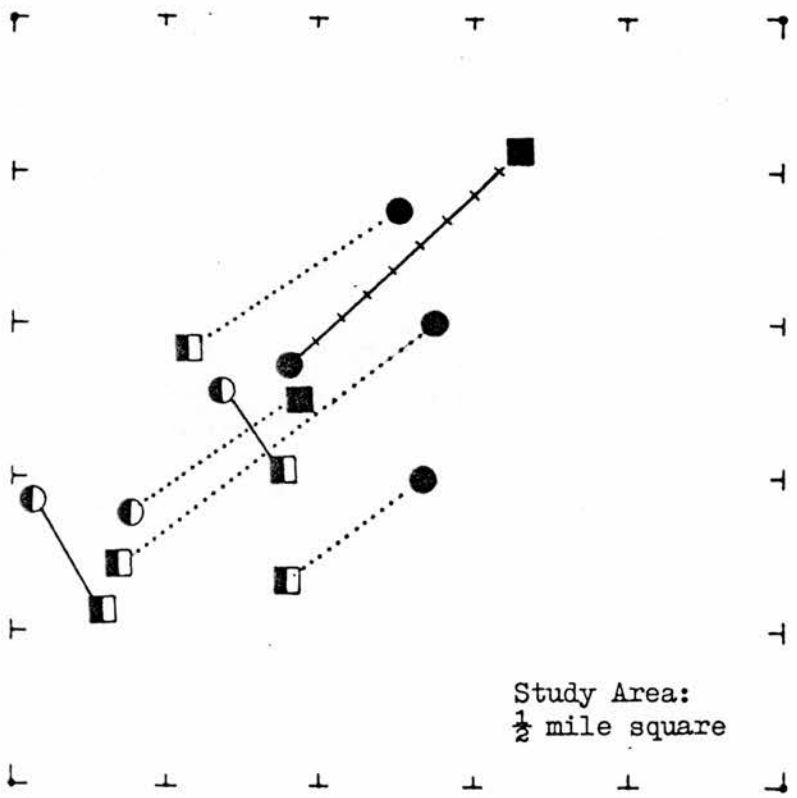
Mixed

Affiliation

| Bride | | Groom |
|---|---|---|
| ◐ | Catholic | ◧ |
| ◑ | Protestant | ◨ |
| ● | Mixed | ■ |

FIGURE 2

Catholic-Protestant Couples married in 'St. Christopher's', 1970; Marriage-partner Locational Links within the Study Area only




KEY

Linkages

Catholic - Catholic

Catholic - Protestant

Catholic - Mixed

Protestant - Mixed

Mixed

Affiliation

| | Bride | Groom |
|---|---|---|
| Catholic | ◐ | ◧ |
| Protestant | ◑ | ◨ |
| Mixed | ● | ■ |

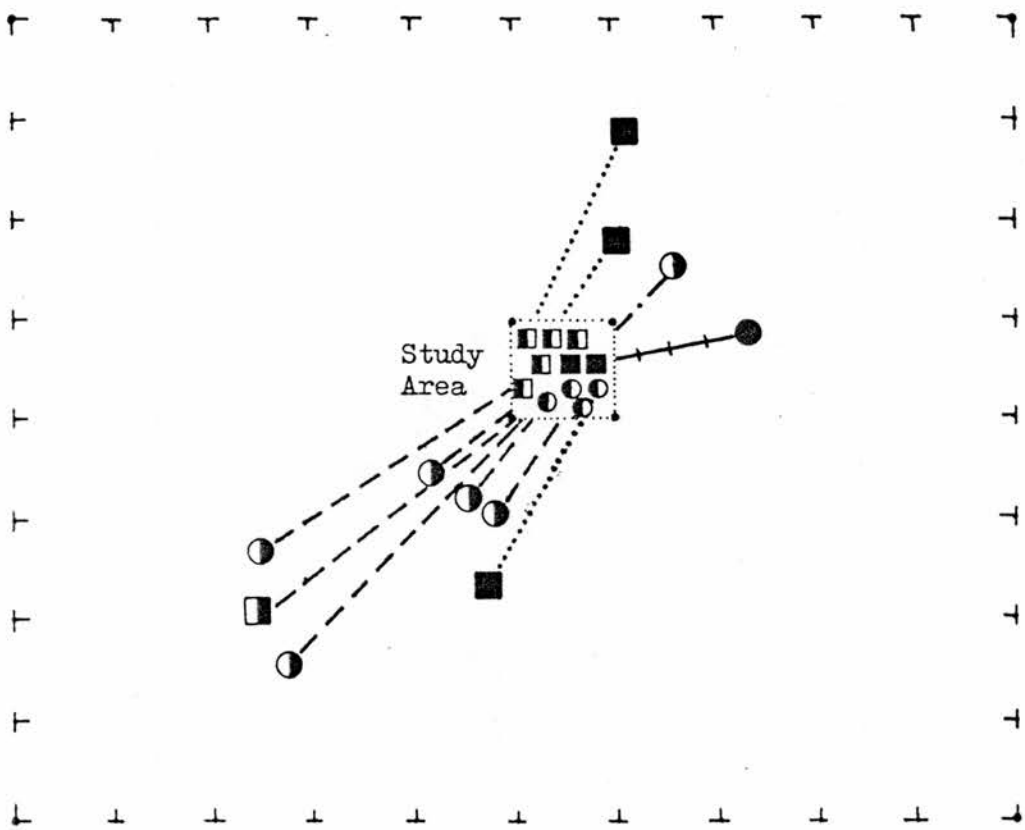
Three out of the four linkages in 1966-67 and five out of the seven in 1970 are comparatively lengthy and with much the same sort of orientation. Except for two linkages in each time period, where both partners lived in Catholic streets (suggesting the presence of a few isolated Protestant families), all the linkages within the study area are between partners living in Catholic streets and those in mixed streets lying to the east.

The interesting feature here is that from discussions with local residents and inspection of the sources previously mentioned (Poole and Boal, 1973; Darby and Morris, 1973) it would seem that the mixed streets shown in fact form part of a transitional zone of such streets on the eastern edge of the study area.

Further, this situation, with Catholic streets giving way to mixed streets which in their turn give way to Protestant streets, stands apparently in some contrast to the situation obtaining on the area's northern, western and southern boundaries. Here, it seems, the transition from an almost completely Catholic area to an almost completely Protestant one is altogether much more rapid. It is this particular spatial organization which should be borne in mind, moreover, when considering the patterns shown in Figures 3 and 4 below for marriage linkages in both time periods between the study area and the rest of the city.

FIGURE 3

Catholic and Protestant Couples married in 'St.Christopher's', 1966-67; Marriage-partner Locational Links between the Study Area and Elsewhere in the City




KEY

Linkages

Catholic - Catholic

Catholic - Protestant

Catholic - Mixed

Protestant - Mixed

Mixed

Affiliation

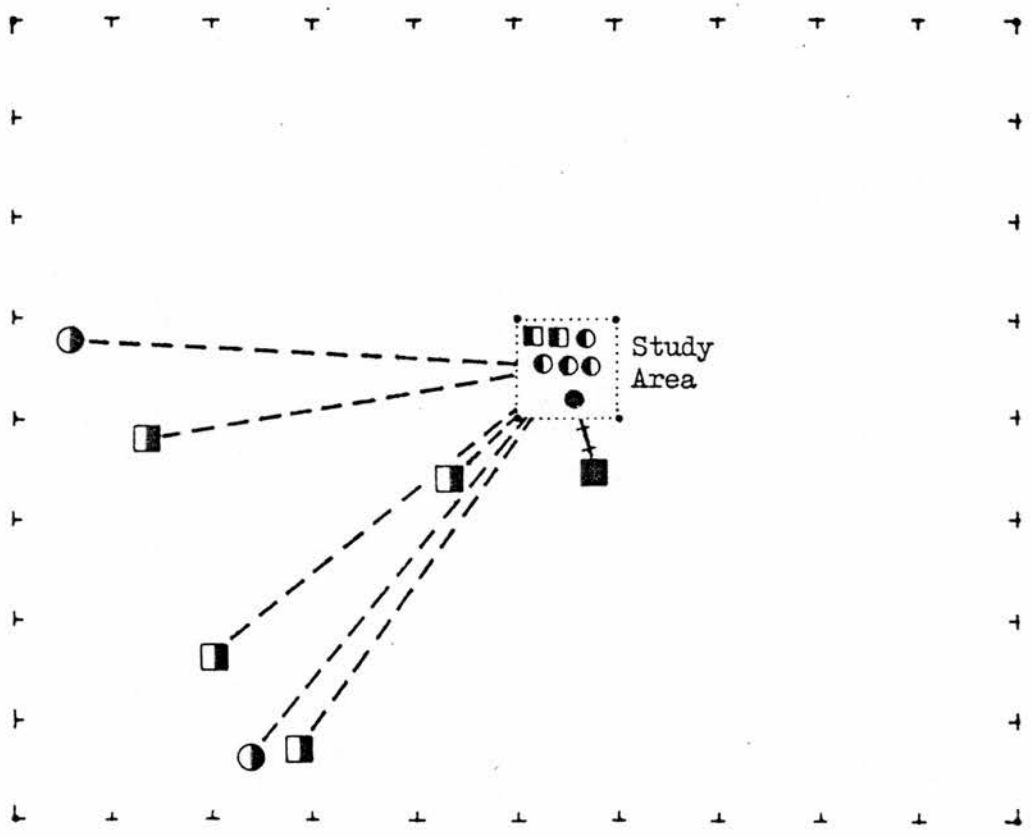
| Bride | | Groom |
|---|---|---|
| ◐ | Catholic | ◧ |
| ◑ | Protestant | ◨ |
| ● | Mixed | ■ |

Taking Figure 3 first, one finds a number of marriage partners who resided close to the study area before marriage. Of these, four are from Protestant streets and one from a mixed street. It should be noted though that each of these streets is located in a cell diagonally adjacent to the study area. At a slightly greater distance and with no apparent clustering three further marriage partners are found, each residing in a mixed street. Finally, three more spouses are seen, each one from a Protestant street at some distance away in a south-westerly direction.

However, in 1970 the pattern differs somewhat. In that year only one out of the seven linkages between the study area and the rest of the city were to cells adjoining the parish. The other five linkages are lengthy and tend to be somewhat more scattered than in the previous period. All are to Protestant streets, while three linkages again lie along a south-westerly axis (Figure 4).

FIGURE 4

Catholic-Protestant Couples married in 'St. Christopher's', 1970; Marriage-partner Locational Links between the Study Area and Elsewhere in the City




KEY

Linkages

Catholic - Catholic

Catholic - Protestant

Catholic - Mixed

Protestant - Mixed

Mixed

Affiliation

Bride

Groom

Catholic

Protestant

Mixed

From Figures 3 and 4 it does seem possible to suggest that the existence of the rigid boundaries mentioned earlier has some significance. In both time periods Catholics living in St. Christopher's parish have tended in the first instance to find Protestant partners either from isolated Protestant families within the study area (the Catholic-Catholic linkages) or from this intermediate zone of mixed streets. They have not apparently ventured into those more specifically Protestant areas lying near to hand. Indeed, only, it appears, when some distance intervenes do marriages into distinctly Protestant areas occur. In other words, even for St. Christopher's residents actually prepared to contract a mixed marriage, there appears to be something uncongenial about crossing a rigid territorial boundary into a contiguous Protestant area to do so.

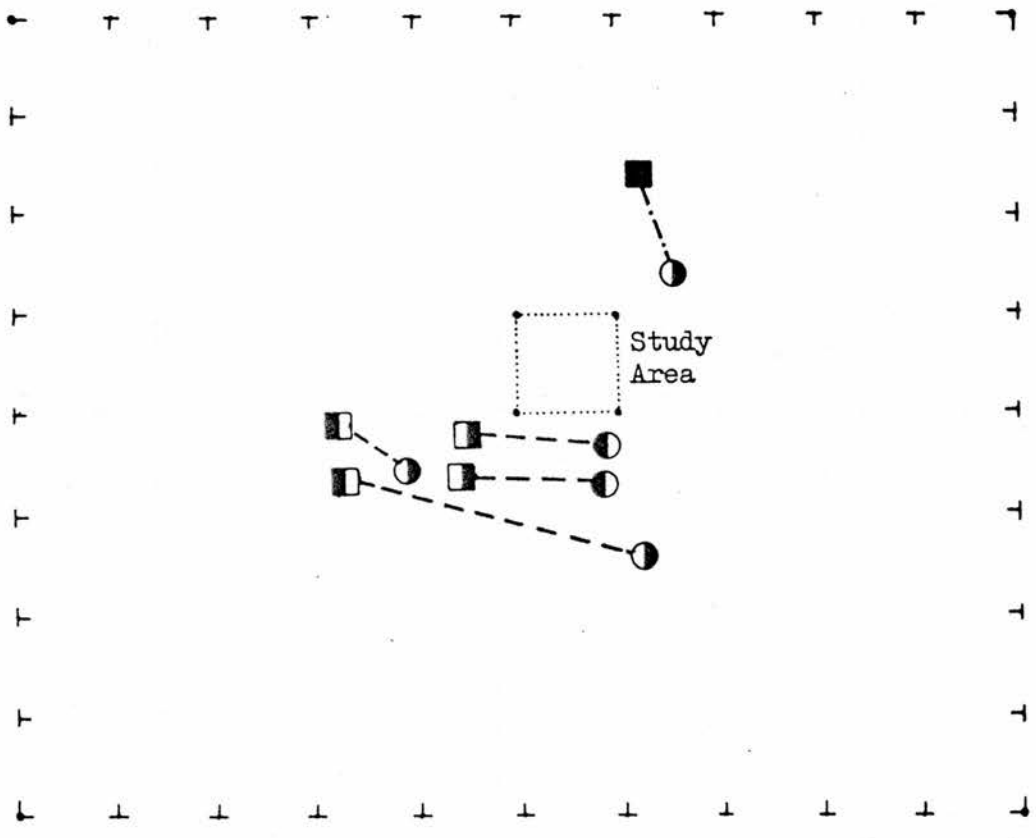
Some support for this contention may come also from patterns of linkages for those couples married in the parish church but living elsewhere in the city, and which are shown in Figures 5 and 6 below.

Couples such as these have probably decided for one reason or another to 'shop around' for a church in which to be married. Perhaps there was some difficulty in applying for a dispensation in the home parish of the Catholic partner. A couple, too, might try to avoid or ameliorate adverse parental reaction by marrying away from their immediate area. Whatever the reason, clearly these sorts of linkages are most likely to be affected by chance factors. Nevertheless, it is noteworthy that in 1966-67 at least (Figure 5), three of the five linkages are quite short and are arranged in a way which might lead one to suspect that territorial boundaries have been crossed. That is, there is a possible suggestion that even where such marriages do occur, reaction may be such that the ceremony may have to be celebrated elsewhere.

In 1970, though, it should be noted that linkages completely external to the parish tend to be longer, more dispersed and in a different direction from those in 1966-67 (Figure 6). This may well be consistent with an increase in tension along religious divides following the severe rioting in Belfast in 1969, which in turn might discourage still further mixed marriages into neighbouring areas. (The numbers involved here are of course too small for this to be anything other than mere speculation.)

FIGURE 5

Catholic-Protestant Couples married in 'St. Christopher's', 1966-67; Marriage-partner Locational Links totally outside the Study Area




KEY

Linkages

Catholic - Catholic

Catholic - Protestant

Catholic - Mixed

Protestant - Mixed

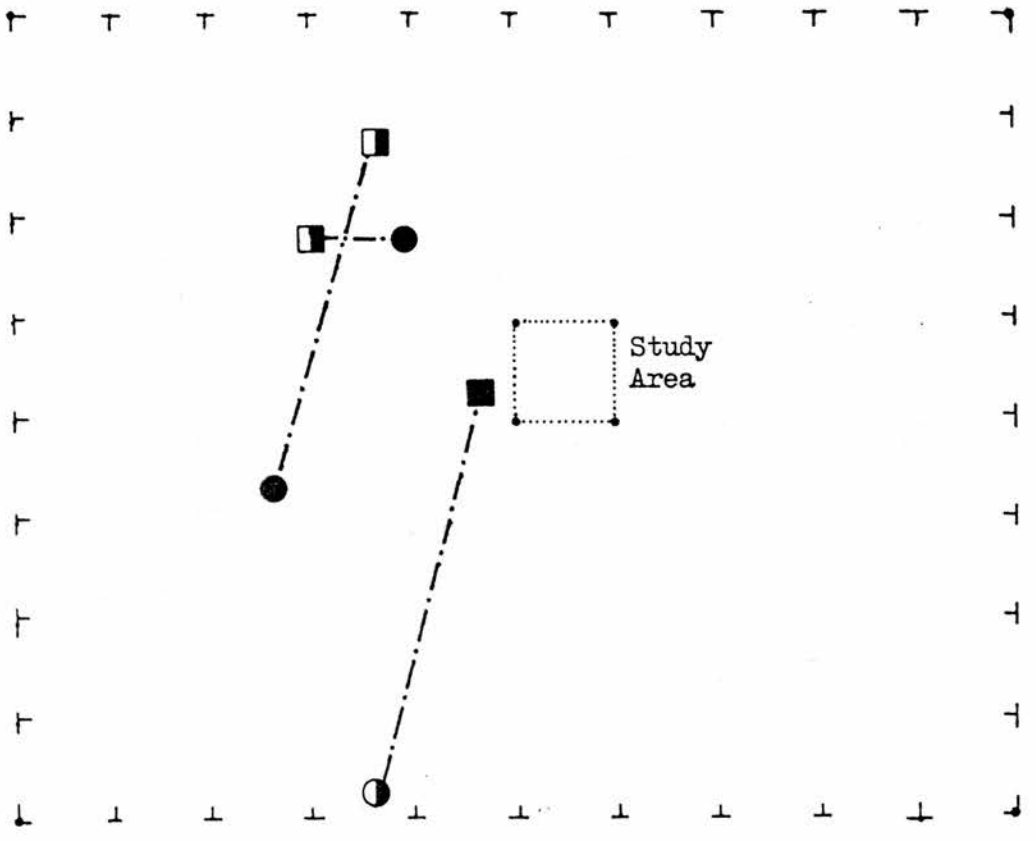
Mixed

Affiliation

| Bride | | Groom |
|---|---|---|
| ◐ | Catholic | ◧ |
| ◑ | Protestant | ◨ |
| ● | Mixed | ■ |

FIGURE 6

Catholic-Protestant Couples married in 'St.Christopher's', 1970;
Marriage-partner Locational Links totally outside the Study Area




KEY

Linkages

Catholic - Catholic

Catholic - Protestant

Catholic - Mixed

Protestant - Mixed

Mixed

Affiliation

| Bride | | Groom |
|---|---|---|
| ◐ | Catholic | ◧ |
| ◑ | Protestant | ◨ |
| ● | Mixed | ■ |

Summary and discussion

It would seem, then, that

(a) Catholics residing in St. Christopher's who marry other Catholics tend to marry within the parish, into other Catholic areas (especially in 1966-67) or with 'isolated' Catholics;

(b) Catholics residing in St. Christopher's who marry Protestants tend to do so either by marrying into the transitional 'mixed' zone on the area's edge or into more completely Protestant areas elsewhere in the city.

Of course, these conclusions are stated rather more definitely than perhaps they should be. We are assuming, it should be stressed again, a significance for these patterns which may simply be the result of chance factors. Yet, the patterns themselves are not implausible. True, it is difficult in the absence of the sort of survey data envisaged earlier or without detailed ethnographic descriptions of Belfast's urban sub-communities to specify precisely the underlying processes at work here, but not altogether impossible.

Looking, first, at (a) above, one may recall the pattern of marriage linkages Boal found on the 'Shankill-Falls Divide'. Here, too, marriage across a sharply defined religious boundary appeared to be minimal. In fact, Boal sees this as only one aspect of a pattern of 'activity segregation' - a situation where "different groups not only do not live in the same area, they also do not interact with each other" (Boal, 1969, 30) - which extends across a number of spheres. He is able to demonstrate convincingly the extent to which the territorial boundary between a Catholic and a Protestant area within the city may be rendered impermeable by the reluctance of individuals to cross it in the course of their day-to-day activity. Protestants and Catholics in Boal's neighbouring study areas quite simply did not

visit in each other's districts, patronized different shops, and even used different bus stops.

Direct and systematic data of this type are unavailable for St. Christopher's. Some observation - of necessity limited given the situation - was carried out in the area in 1972, however. This being well after the outbreak of communal violence in Northern Ireland, it is not entirely appropriate to 'read back' its findings into the two time periods under discussion. Nevertheless, it is not difficult to see how, even before the 'troubles', a resident of the study area could satisfy many of his or her routine social and recreational needs from within the area itself. A process which would, of course, minimize the circumstances under which a boundary needs to be crossed, and which, further, allows for the meeting of only a limited range of eligibles.

In fact, there is some general evidence that many of Belfast's neighbourhoods and smaller sub-communities are similarly structured. Wiener (n.d., 76) for instance can describe the 'Hammer', a Protestant neighbourhood in West Belfast, thus:

> The Hammer community, for example, contained three primary schools, a playground, a Unionist hall, 2 band rehearsal rooms as well as 70 shops and small businesses ... 4 public houses, three churches and three mission halls, all in an area with 3000 people. For many people therefore the community met all their needs and except for going onto the Shankill Road itself, they would rarely leave it. It was not uncommon to find people who couldn't place streets which were no more than a quarter of a mile from where they lived but which were outside their communities' boundary.

Such a picture applied to the present study area would be perhaps a little overdrawn, although the overall range of social facilities is not dissimilar. St. Christopher's, of course, possesses

neither a Unionist hall nor band rehearsal rooms. Local people claim, though, that before 1969 the area boasted 3 pubs, 3 social clubs and 2 sporting clubs almost entirely Catholic in composition, and that, later, when two of the pubs, like many others in Belfast suffered at the hands of rioters, their trade was taken over almost entirely by the clubs (and retained therefore within the area). On a rather different plane, too, one finds that the importance of parochial organization in Roman Catholicism ensures that a wide range of activities, social and spiritual, are available which potentially embrace every Catholic in the area. By contrast, there appears to have been an almost total lack of what one might call, almost literally, 'bridging institutions' providing face-to-face contact between those on opposite sides of the territorial boundaries. (Paradoxically, as far as one can gather, such institutions only emerged some time after the onset of the 'troubles' when a number of 'peace groups' like 'Women Together' and 'Protestant and Catholic Encounter' began to appear. As far as can be judged, though, their membership is made up of the already married, in any case, and so they do not form reservoirs of eligibles.)

At the same time, it is also clear that patterns of activity segregation may extend beyond the purely local level. Returning to Boal's work once again, we find (Boal 1969, 47) that his Catholic study area is joined by visit connections to other Catholic areas throughout the city. Similarly, his Protestant study area is joined to other Protestant districts. Boal, unfortunately, produces no data comparable to that shown at (a) above for marriage linkages between scattered religious enclaves. He does imply, though (Boal 1969, 47), that this is indeed the case by remarking that "this segregation (in marriage linkages) can also be demonstrated for the urban area and, to some extent, for Ireland as a whole".

It is not difficult to guess at some of the reasons lying behind such patterns. The existence in Catholic areas of associations and activities of a Gaelic or Nationalist complexion is almost certainly relevant here. (In the Protestant community it may be that the Orange Order performs similar functions. As Conor Cruise O'Brien has rather drily observed, one feature of the Orange celebrations on July 12th are "girls snake-dancing, wearing Union Jacks, and automatically picking up nice Protestant boys, in an atmosphere of parental approval" (O'Brien 1974, 218).) Furthermore, if as Boal implies, and as these data suggest, at least for 1966-67, dispersed territorial segments are linked by marriage, then a cumulative process may well be introduced. Quite possibly, one might suggest, pre-existing kinship ties may serve as a channel for yet further contact between areas.

Leaving for the moment the question of marriage linkages between St. Christopher's and those Catholics scattered throughout the city as a whole, let us now move on to examine those patterns summarized at (b) above, those concerning, in other words, intermarrying linkages. There is some tendency, as we have seen, for Catholics in the study area to marry into the mixed area on its eastern edge. As this stands in quite sharp contrast to the situation obtaining along the area's other borders, it suggests that the nature of the boundary itself may make some difference as far as interreligious courtship and marriage is concerned. This is both a commonsensical enough notion and a fairly plausible one given what little is known about the nature of religious boundaries in Belfast.

One would guess, in fact, that St. Christopher's eastern boundary differs from its other boundaries by not constituting quite so clearly a 'defensible space'. Defensible space, a term introduced by the architect and planner Oscar Newman (1973, 3), is "a surrogate term for the range of mechanisms - real and symbolic barriers, strongly

defined areas of influence and improved opportunities for surveillance - that combine to bring an environment under the control of its residents". Impressionistically at least some of these elements, barriers, areas of influence and opportunities for surveillance, are less well developed on St. Christopher's eastern edge than they are elsewhere in the area.

There is little doubt that in Northern Ireland symbolic boundaries between religiously homogeneous areas are in existence and are clearly perceived. In part, this may be guessed at from the sensitivity which often surrounds the displaying of emblems or the routing of marches. Wright (1973, 250), for instance, observes that in some areas a "web of traditional agreements" has existed which regulate the acceptable placing of the street arches associated with the Orange celebrations in July such that they will not normally be introduced into 'Catholic' territory. And indeed, something of this sort seems to have occurred along a part of the western boundary of St. Christopher's which is formed by a main road. There is, it is true, much less evidence of the kerb painting and wall slogans documented by Boal (1969), although these are by no means completely absent. What is notable, though, is that in the past, apparently, the display of factional emblems on the 'wrong' side of the road has led to protracted and somewhat bitter recriminations. Impressionistically, though, the transitional streets on St. Christopher's eastern edge do seem to be regarded as falling within the Catholic 'sphere of influence'. Certainly, it appears to be the case that, although there has been some variation in this regard, some or all of these transitional streets have been included on the routes of the Catholic religious processions held annually to mark the feasts of Corpus Christi and the Assumption.

Once again, Boal's work is also suggestive here by pointing to the variability which may occur in the perception of an area's

territorial limits. By asking respondents living on the 'Shankill-Falls Divide' in Belfast to define spatially the area in which they lived, Boal (1969) found that,

> The lateral limits of 'Shankill' and 'Springfield' are less strongly perceived, but the strength of perception of these lateral limits is, in turn, asymmetrical. That is, the limit on the side towards the religious divide is much more strongly perceived than the limit away from it.

Moreover,

> In addition, not only is the Divide limit more strongly perceived - there is also a high level of agreement on both sides of the Divide as to where the limit lies.

In fact, neither 'Springfield' nor 'Shankill' is strictly analogous to the study area, since unlike St. Christopher's neither is a relatively isolated enclave. As a result, disagreement in these areas over their limits away from the 'Divide' may be relatively unimportant since they involve no change of religious composition. There is therefore no independent evidence for the effect of a 'mixed' area on the perception of a district's territorial limits, and it was not possible to collect any systematic evidence of this sort for St. Christopher's. It may be worth remarking, though, that there has been some population change in St. Christopher's transitional area since 1970 in the direction of increased religious homogeneity, and such forced 'clarification' of the boundary may in its way be evidence of its less-than-clearly-perceived status beforehand.[1]

What, though, of opportunities for surveillance? Newman (1973, esp. Cps. 4 and 7) is, of course, talking about a situation where the increased visibility of a criminal activity may allow it to be brought quickly to the attention of law-enforcement agencies. In the context discussed here what is involved is the observation of a legal but

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[1] Such movements, of course, have been quite common in Belfast in recent years.

disapproved-of incursion into a religious group's territory for the purposes of courtship and the mobilization of communal social control to discourage it.

Something of this sort certainly seems to have occurred in Belfast. Weiner (n.d., 76) has claimed that the size of many neighbourhoods in the city is "determined by the defensive need to be able to recognize everyone who lived in it (the neighbourhood) and therefore in times of conflict to immediately recognize (sic) strangers". Dillon and Lehane (1973) have documented various cases of assassination where the victims were involved in interreligious liaisons (see especially pp.72, 79, 81, 223 and 239). There is even some evidence that social control may be mobilized quite effectly where an interreligious courtship has breached a territorial boundary. John Burns (1972) in a journalistic interview with two teenage gang members in Belfast raised the question of 'mixed' courtship and in both replies, interestingly, the notion of 'going over' - "if she goes over to see him the other girls beat her up" - and 'getting over' - "we would wait for him and beat him up and make sure he doesn't get over again" - occurs. What is by no means clear, though, is whether or not such forms of social control are actively mobilized in less troubled times.

The comments of local residents in St. Christopher's did not suggest that such mobilization routinely occurs. It can also be shown that attempted social control of interreligious courtship from outside the family may in fact be bitterly resented. In other words, it may only be in times of hostility when quite possibly security considerations are important that surveillance and its consequences are important.

Now, the line of argument so far has been that 'defensibility' is an important feature of communal life in many areas of Belfast, even

though it may vary in nature and effect (say with respect to intermarriage) depending on the disposition of territorial boundaries and/or the level of communal tension at any given time. If this is the case, though, a difficulty arises in accounting for those intermarriage linkages between the study area and various Protestant localities elsewhere in the city. Will not these localities constitute 'defensible spaces' also?

The answer is, of course, "in all probability, yes", but it might be fair to assume that the longer a linkage the more likely it is that the initial pre-marital contact was made non-locally, and outside, therefore, the sort of territorial constraints outlined earlier. That is, in 'associational' or 'market place' contexts like the workplace or in commercial recreational facilities which are not necessarily territorially dependent, quite possibly as a result of their being centrally located.

Actually, one might have expected the influence of such 'neutral' contexts to have been greater in respect of religious intermarriage. However, if one compares the distributions of all grooms in Tables 11 and 12 with the corresponding distributions of Protestant grooms in Figures 5 and 6, it will be readily apparent that long and scattered Catholic-Catholic linkages (i.e. to 'isolated' Catholics) are not altogether uncommon. In other words, the existence of informal patterns of segregation in the use, say, of recreational facilities cannot be ruled out.

What is intriguing, though, is the apparent change mentioned earlier in the distribution of grooms from one time period to the other, such that in 1970 the importance of expressly Catholic areas as 'reservoirs' of eligibles appears to be somewhat diminished. Naturally,

one cannot rule out the possibility that this seeming occurrence is the result of chance. Yet again, this sort of change is not entirely implausible. Belfast is a radial city, so that travel in and out from the centre, especially by public transport, is considerably easier than travel from sector to sector. This is a tendency which one would further assume would be encouraged as communal tension rises, since inter-sectoral travel would then, quite definitely, involve the crossing of 'hostile' territory. Beyond this conjecture, one can note that Laurence (1974) found a clear tendency for young men in the Shankill area to move further afield in the search for 'safe' recreational facilities as violence in the city increased. Additionally, Det. Insp. Jack Scully of the R.U.C. Drug Squad has pointed out in a personal communication that certain 'neutral' areas in Belfast, especially near the university, have attracted young people with an interest in the counter-culture from both Catholic and Protestant areas in the city. Ironically, therefore, an increase in communal tension may both discourage intermarriage by increasing the rigidity of territorial boundaries, and encourage it because individuals may seek to avoid that tension altogether by seeking out 'safe' or 'neutral' areas which allow for mixing.

# PART III : INTERMARRIAGE FORMATION

## Chapter 7 The Interview Study

The present chapter provides a prelude to those that follow by discussing how the sample for the interview study was obtained, how the research was actually carried out and how sense was finally made of the interview material obtained.

To recapitulate, it had been decided that it would be necessary in the ideal to obtain a sample of 30 to 40 Catholic-Protestant couples living in the Belfast urban area who it was hoped could be interviewed about their perceptions of themselves, their respective groups, their relationships and about the coping mechanisms which it was presumed underlay relations between them. It was also hoped that the sample eventually obtained would be broadly representative in demographic terms, and would be spread across the family cycle. A further decision was made that only those in relatively stable marriages would be sampled and that cases where one partner had converted to the religious faith of the other partner would be excluded.

In this case, as for most previous studies of intermarried couples, it was not possible to obtain access to an adequate sampling frame. Lists commonly employed for sampling purposes - electoral registers and the like - rarely contain sufficient information to allow intermarried couples to be unequivocally identified. In some circumstances data on the respective categorical statuses of a couple may be obtained during marriage-registration procedures but the information collected at this time typically gives no indication of post-marriage location. Given their tendency to be less devotionally active, religiously heterogamous couples are less likely than their homogamous counterparts to find their way onto church rolls or records

of a similar type, and where they do they may be represented by only one partner. In one or two cases it has proved possible to make use of naturally occurring 'outcroppings' (Webb et al., 1966) in order to sample intermarried couples. Hunt and Coller (1957), for example, were able to obtain a sample of American servicemen married to Philippine women who were resident on an U.S. Army base. (See also Harre's (1966) use of a teacher-training college in Auckland as a source for Maori-White couples.) These, however, appear to be relatively unusual circumstances. The use of systematic screening or survey sampling techniques is presumably only feasible where intermarriage is extensive.

In these circumstances there seemed little choice but to use as a method of sampling the kind of 'snowball' sampling technique which has been ubiquitously employed in previous studies of intermarried couples. In other words an attempt would be made to contact individual couples through personal contacts in the hope that they might then serve as a source of further referrals, a strategy which in any case offered a particular advantage given the conditions under which it was necessary for the fieldwork to proceed.

The fieldwork for the present study was carried out within an environment which was frequently threatening, uncertain and psychologically wearing. The situation was one in which various groups - and not always illegal ones - were known to have the means and the will to inflict violence, though where, when and with what force remained always unpredictable. Consequently, a temptation exists to describe the fieldwork situation in terms of some notion of the sociologist as hero - the dashing social scientist dodging bombs and bullets in an intrepid search for truth. However gratifying this might be to the researcher's ego, it is a notion which should quickly be discarded. For one thing it does a great disservice to all those exposed to the

violence and danger produced by the Northern Ireland situation who do not possess the option of withdrawal to safe havens within and beyond Northern Ireland which a researcher is likely to have at his disposal. For another, it obscures a reality which is in fact rather different. The sociologist, far from being a hero, becomes of necessity a 'routine coward', adept at evaluating the environment for the threat it poses and at avoiding danger by minimizing his availability as a potential target. In other words, just as those in Burton's study (1978, 20) did,

> ... one generally walks round parked uninhabited cars with suspicion, casts unnerving glances at unattended parcels, scrambles to get home before it is too dark, maps out safe and dangerous routes for journeys, all in an effort to evaluate risks which previously could be ignored[1]

Since they are also routine cowards, those who are studied in this kind of situation may perceive risks in being researched. In the case of those who are intermarried this may not be entirely without justification. Since they are capable of being defined as deviant, perhaps of being judged as having betrayed their community by marrying beyond its borders, couples may feel themselves to be potentially vulnerable to intimidation or worse.

It was therefore felt that the research procedures adopted for this study would need to be of a kind which allowed the couples to trust the researcher and which allowed the researcher to protect the couples. This meant, in the first place, approaching the couples with care. It was assumed that intermarried couples fearing the possibility of intimidation might be wary of a direct approach from a stranger whatever his claims to academic respectability. Snowball sampling fortunately permitted the initial approach always to be made through an intermediary known to and trusted by the couple - very often a couple who had already been interviewed. Having made contact, the research role and

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[1] Even with these precautions there were two 'close shaves', one provided by a bomb which went off without warning in an adjacent building and the other resulting from gunfire directed at a nearby army patrol. After these incidents the habit of children in some areas of Belfast of stoning anyone with an unfamiliar face began to be regarded as a minor inconvenience.

the obligation this placed on the researcher to protect the couple's anonymity and the confidentiality of their responses were stressed.

Couples: the sampling procedure

Following the initial fieldwork trip to Northern Ireland at the end of 1971, the bulk of the fieldwork was carried out in the summer of 1972, with further trips to Northern Ireland in 1973 and one in 1974. In all 27 Catholic-Protestant couples - 23 of them married, 4 of them engaged - the majority of whom were living in and around Belfast, were interviewed during the course of the research. (Two couples were actually interviewed outside Northern Ireland though their courtships had taken place there.) In no case had one partner formally converted to the religious denomination of the other.

The sample size achieved falls somewhat short of the original target of 30 to 40 couples, although it does represent, nevertheless, a considerable expenditure of time and effort trying to contact 'mixed' couples willing to be interviewed. The fieldwork itself was for the most part dispiriting since the snowball metaphor associated with the chosen sampling method proved not to be entirely apt. One was not faced by an inexorably growing mass of contacts but rather with a slow and uneven accretion of additional data points.

In retrospect this is not altogether surprising. As originally conceived, snowball sampling involved the attempt, as Coleman (1958) puts it, "to sample explicitly with reference to the social structure". The starting point for a snowball sample is therefore most properly an initial random sample from which further sample elements are selected for inclusion on the basis of a predefined sociometric relation to those already chosen. In other words, a population is being sampled in which definable relations occur throughout the universe and where a determinable structure of communication, influence,

or some other kind of relation, is in existence. Indeed it is usually this structure which is precisely the object of study.

Where, as in the search for members of rare populations, the interest is in attributes rather than relations, one may gain some advantage from not having to predefine the sociometric criteria for inclusion in the sample. A pair of contacts in a chain need be linked by no more than knowledge of the existence of one by the other. Even so, in most cases - although this is rarely made clear - one is still sampling with reference to the social structure though, this time, in an implicit manner. Inclusion of additional sample elements depends on the structured linkages which exist both within the rare population and between those possessing the rare trait and the 'normal' population. All things being equal, sample coverage will be easier to attain in a numerically small group where sub-cultural organization is well developed than where it is absent.

In the case of religiously intermarried couples in Northern Ireland such organization was not manifest during the period of the fieldwork. Links between intermarried couples and between the intermarried and the wider population appeared to be fragmentary. As has already been seen functionaries of various kinds - clergymen, marriage-guidance counsellors and social workers - had little contact with intermarried couples or had relations with them of a kind which produced a professional unease about providing contacts. In other words, linkages providing access to the rare population were relatively attenuated. At the same time nothing approaching a specific sub-culture of couples was uncovered and only after a substantial part of the fieldwork had been completed did a voluntary association of couples come into existence. Moreover, it also became clear that even knowledge about intermarried couples may not be well distributed.

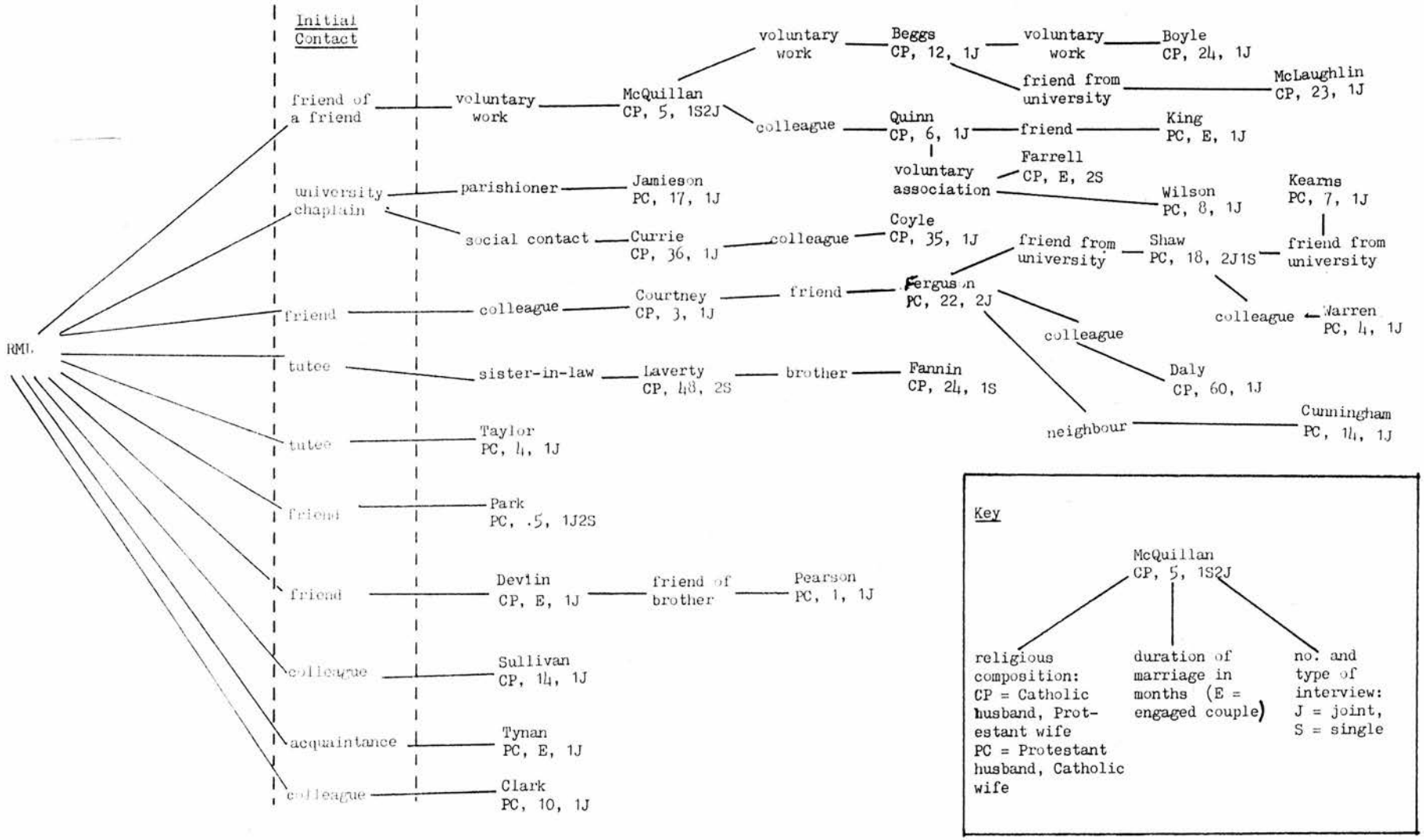
Unlike inter-racial couples, say, the religiously intermarried are not immediately visible and they may, of course, take care to conceal the 'mixed' nature of their relationship from those around them.

An indication of how the sampling strategy proceeded is given in Figure 7. Here one can note that a number of initial contacts emerged on what was almost a chance basis through people in Britain who knew couples in Northern Ireland and who made contact with them by letter or telephone. It can also be seen that a number of couples had only limited contact with others like themselves. In six cases, for instance, the couple interviewed knew of no others at all who might be approached, while in three further cases only one further contact was provided who in turn knew of no one else. This meant that sampling took on an 'excursionary' character with progress being made as far as possible from an initial starting point before contact depletion made it necessary to return and begin the search for contacts all over again.

Luckily, two rather more substantial networks were uncovered: one containing eight couples, the other seven. In each of these networks there proved to be fortunately at least one couple who had a detailed interest in the research and who took it upon themselves to 'look out' for additional couples who might be persuaded to be interviewed. (One of these couples, it might be noted, went on to become founder-members of the Northern Ireland Mixed Marriage Association, an organization set up by ecumenically oriented couples.)

Further problems arose because some of the intermediaries and one or two of the couples would claim to know a number of people eligible for interview but in practice would be content to make arrangements for an interview with only one or two. Perhaps most seriously, it also proved to be very difficult to keep an accurate tally of refusals.

Figure 7: Chart showing composition and characteristics of the interview sample, and relational connexions between sample members



In some cases, for instance, the suspicion arose that refusals were being reported when in fact it appeared that the intermediary had not contacted the prospective respondents at all. Conversely, in one or two other cases it appears that the intermediary tried to avoid the embarrassment of reporting a refusal by claiming not to have been able to reach the particular couple in question.

Despite attempts to impress upon intermediaries the importance of finding out why a couple had refused, the reports given tended to be vague - "they're just not willing", for example, or "they don't have the time". In three instances, though, it was reported that the couple were worried about the disclosure of the 'mixed' nature of their relationship to those around them. It seems, for instance, that the wife in one case taught in a school where many of the pupils were on the fringes of paramilitary activity. As a result she was worried that her authority in class would be undermined if the boys she taught found out about her marriage. In this context it is, of course, meaningless to talk about a response rate, but it is estimated that the couples interviewed comprised roughly 60% of those of whom mention had been made.

Sample characteristics

Turning to the sample itself, we find that couples where the male partner is Catholic and the female partner Protestant are overrepresented in comparison to the data available from the census tabulations. The proportions in the census are in fact about 2:1 in favour of couples where the husband is Protestant. In the sample the proportions are very nearly 50:50 - 14 Catholic-Protestant couples (where the first-mentioned is the religion of the male partner) to 13 Protestant-Catholic combinations. All of the married couples interviewed were in first marriages, and the recently married predominated. While the maximum duration of marriage to the time of interview was 5 years, the

minimum was a mere 2 weeks, and the median duration was only 17 months. Not surprisingly, then, only four of the couples had children when interviewed, three of them having one child each, while the fourth - the couple in the marriage of longest duration - had three children. The couples, too, seemed to have married at a slightly younger age than average. The mean age of marriage in the sample is 23.5 for husbands and 22.7 for wives against a figure for Northern Ireland as a whole of 25.8 for men and 23.6 for women for the period 1968 to 1973. Perhaps more revealing in this context, though, is that the modal value for age at marriage among those sampled stands at 21 for both men and women - a consequence, one presumes, of the number of couples who passed through university together and who married on graduation.

This bias towards the rather more highly educated is further emphasised when patterns of educational attainment for those in the sample are considered. Table 13 shows a cross-classification of the male partner's educational attainment by the female partner's educational attainment, both measured in terms of the highest qualification ever obtained.

TABLE 13

Sample of married and engaged Catholic-Protestant couples: Male partner's highest educational qualification by female partner's highest educational qualification

| MALE'S HIGHEST QUAL. | FEMALE PARTNER'S HIGHEST QUALIFICATION OBTAINED | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Degree or higher | Prof'l quals. | 'A' levels or equivalent | 'O' levels or equivalent | Unqualified | Still Student | Total |
| Degree or higher | 11 | 1 | 1 | - | - | 1 | 14 |
| Prof'l quals. | - | 2 | - | 1 | - | - | 3 |
| 'A' levels or equiv. | 1 | - | - | - | - | - | 1 |
| 'O' levels or equiv. | - | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | - | 4 |
| Unqualified | - | - | - | 1 | - | 1 | 2 |
| Still student | 1 | - | 1 | - | - | 1 | 3 |
| Total | 13 | 4 | 3 | 3 | 1 | 3 | 27 |

Here, too, the concentration in the upper left-hand corner of the table is quite clear. Cases where both partners are in professional occupations (classes I and II) amount to 63% of those sampled, while the total number of couples in which one or both partners is in a manual occupation is only five. Even then these couples are themselves hardly likely to be representative, since in two cases the female partner has slightly higher status than the male, while in another two cases she is in fact a student.

Some attempt was made to broaden the class composition of the sample itself since the demographic data, which by this time had been obtained, showed that working-class couples were more numerous than had been supposed. This presented a difficulty insofar as attempts to penetrate working-class communities might do what had been avoided up till then - the drawing of attention to the research itself, to intermarried couples in general and to couples in those areas in particular. Nevertheless an attempt was made to make some discreet enquiries. The intermediary through whom the attempt was made promised to arrange interviews with three couples, but then suddenly became impossible to contact. When it was later discovered that he had connections with a paramilitary group it was decided to let the matter drop.

The sample, then, contains few individuals in manual occupations. It is also worth noting that it also proved difficult to reach some kinds of middle-class couples. As mentioned earlier, some couples in the sample suggested that a number of their friends were intermarried without being willing to approach them for the purposes of the research. It was noticeable, however, that these couples and their friends were of relatively high professional standing, and it may be that for these couples a sociological interest in the 'mixed' character of their relationship suggested an imputation of deviance which they felt to be

Quite strikingly, in about half of the cases both partners had university degrees, while cases in which at least one partner had a degree come close to 60%. Among those remaining there are only two cases in which a partner left school at the minimum school-leaving age, and those still in higher education are relatively well represented.

Given the sorts of figures just presented, it is hardly surprising to find that the occupational distribution in the sample is skewed towards the top end. Table 14 shows a cross-classification of social class for male and female partner using the Registrar General's classification of social class. (Nearly all of the female partners were still working or were students. In the four cases where she was a housewife, her most recent occupation has been taken.)

TABLE 14

Sample of married and engaged Catholic-Protestant couples:
Social class of male partner by social class of female partner
(Registrar General's classification)

| SOCIAL CLASS OF MALE PARTNER | SOCIAL CLASS OF FEMALE PARTNER | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | I | II | IIIN | IIIM | IV | V | Student | Total |
| I | 2 | 7 | 1 | - | - | - | - | 10 |
| II | - | 7 | - | - | - | - | 1 | 8 |
| IIIN | - | 1 | - | - | - | 1 | - | 2 |
| IIIM | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| IV | - | - | 2 | - | - | - | 1 | 3 |
| V | - | - | - | - | - | - | 1 | 1 |
| Student | - | 1 | 1 | - | - | - | 1 | 3 |
| Total | 2 | 16 | 4 | - | - | 1 | 4 | 27 |

incompatible with their occupational status.

Given the relative occupational positions of Catholics and Protestants in Northern Ireland and generally increasing opportunities for access to higher education, one might expect the Catholic partners in the sample to exhibit some degree of upward social mobility. The extent to which this is the case is shown in Table 15, in which four kinds of mobility experience are displayed by sex and religion combined. The overwhelming majority of those in the sample, whatever their religion and whatever their sex, are shown in Table 15 to be in non-manual occupations and to have had non-manual fathers.

TABLE 15

Sample of married and engaged Catholic-Protestant couples: Social mobility experiences by sex and religion combined - students excluded

| | MOBILITY EXPERIENCE | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Respondent non-manual; father non-manual | Respondent non-manual; father manual | Respondent manual; father non-manual | Respondent manual; father manual |
| Catholic males | 9 | 1 | 1 | - |
| Protestant males | 7 | 3 | - | - |
| Catholic females | 11 | - | 1 | 1 |
| Protestant females | 9 | 2 | - | 1 |
| Total (N = 46) | 36 | 6 | 2 | 2 |

One further point of note relates to the geographical mobility of those in the sample. The majority had met in Belfast and had lived there since marriage. In 17 out of the 27 cases, however, one or both

partners had been born or raised elsewhere - most of them in country towns in the east or north-west of Northern Ireland. Whether this is in fact typical of the overall population of 'mixed' marriages in Northern Ireland it is not possible to say. Growing up in certain kinds of milieux may of course have an influence on the perception of out-group members, while living away from home may also have given a number of those in the sample a freedom they may not otherwise have had. Interestingly, Beach (1974, 105) points out that many of the early leaders of the radical People's Democracy movement were students who had come to attend university in Belfast from provincial towns elsewhere in Northern Ireland.

There is little evidence that the relationships studied were highly conflictual. Most of those in the sample appeared to be contented with their partner and with their marriage. This naturally suggests that an element of self-selection is present in the sample with couples who may have been having difficulties not appearing, either because they were not suggested by intermediaries or because they preferred not to be interviewed.

The interviewing

Since the intent was to conduct a piece of exploratory research, no use was made of a standardized questionnaire schedule. Instead the interview was conducted with the help of an aide-memoire in which the following topics were covered: family background, schooling and area, partners' courtship careers, the establishment and development of the relationship itself, the decision to marry, the process of getting married, the reactions of parents and others, and married life. (For the full version of the aide-memoire, see Appendix.)

Implicit in the aide-memoire is a loose chronological sequence in both biographical and relational terms. No attempt was made to stick

rigidly to this implicit sequence, and topics were followed out of sequence if this were appropriate. However, since it allowed for a more or less 'natural' progression from past to present, most interviews followed the pattern found in the aide memoire.

The interviews themselves, which average an hour and twenty minutes in length, were tape-recorded and the tapes transcribed. In most cases interviews were carried out in the home of those who had agreed to be interviewed. In two cases an arrangement was made to meet the couple in a public setting where it was possible for them to 'size up' the researcher and, presumably, the potential threat which he might pose. Supplementary interviews were carried out in a number of cases where there was some need for further information or the clarification of ambiguities, and a periodic acquaintanceship was maintained with a number of couples.

The attempt was made in the first few instances to ensure that the partners were interviewed separately, and ideally this would have been preferable in every case to avoid the possibility of the interviewees presenting a prearranged 'front'. Most often, however, the couples were interviewed together. While this is unfortunate, it was judged necessary for a number of reasons. Firstly, the whole point of doing separate interviews was vitiated by the fact that for 'security' reasons couples were initially contacted through an intermediary, some of whom were couples who knew about the kinds of questions being asked. In other words, couples were frequently already in a position to produce a 'front' if they wished to do so. Secondly, because no assistant was available to conduct parallel interviews, it became necessary to ask one partner to wait in another room - a procedure which proved embarrassing to all concerned, particularly so where some of the more recently married couples lived in quite small flats. Thirdly, separate interviews on

the same evening meant leaving the respondents' home at a late hour. Interviewing the couple together avoided the problem of travelling across the city - in this case on foot - late at night during a time when the number of sectarian assassinations was beginning to increase.

Reflecting on his own fieldwork experience and drawing on research in areas such as cojoint family therapy, Graham Allan has recently (1980) summarized the advantages and disadvantages of joint interviews with married partners. While joint interviews may in his view exacerbate difficulties normally inherent in the interview situation to do, for example, with the establishment and maintenance of rapport, they bring two main benefits. Firstly, one is obtaining in a joint interview two accounts instead of one. Each account therefore may serve as a source of corroboration, supplementation or correction for the other. Secondly, joint interviews allow one to observe spousal interaction, which in itself both provides data about the relationship and some basis for an assessment of reliability and validity.

Observation in the interview situation suggests that if one excepts one or two isolated instances, couples did talk relatively freely about themselves and about their relationship. Hesitancy, evasiveness or attempts by one partner to dominate the proceedings all seemed uncommon. Indeed, one had a sense very frequently that the interview was for the couples a cathartic experience which provided them with an opportunity they had not had previously to discuss their situation with a sympathetic, uninvolved and trustworthy stranger. It is clear, too, that although the prospect of an interview had caused most of the couples of reminisce about their courtship, they do not seem to have rehearsed responses beforehand. Different perceptions and evaluations did emerge in the interview, to the extent that it was not uncommon for couples to disagree at least about the timing and interpretation of

particular events. In one case, for example, quite different perceptions by husband and wife of the wife's current religious identification were revealed. It is not possible of course to assess, where differences were made apparent, whether they were expressed in as forceful a manner as perhaps under other circumstances they might have been.

A further point to be borne in mind is that the accounts a couple were asked to give of their relationship were not only made in each other's presence but were for the most part retrospective. In consequence there arise difficulties of two kinds. The first of these has to do with problems of recall. As had some of Mayer's Jewish-Gentile couples (1961, 50-51), a number of those interviewed claimed difficulty simply in remembering how they had felt on a particular occasion or in a particular situation. In such circumstances, while recourse may be had to careful and persistent probing, it is likely that a tendency occurs for 'events' to be recalled more clearly than 'meanings'.

A second and more serious problem posed by the retrospective character of couples' accounts is that of a tendency for the past to be reinterpreted. Becker and Geer (1957) have pointed out that personal change involves in itself changes in the way past states, feelings and activities are subjectively perceived and interpreted, and there are grounds for believing that a continuing reinterpretation of the past is inevitably a central feature of relationships proceeding towards marriage. As Berger and Kellner suggest (1964, 15),

> ... it is not only the ongoing experience of the two partners that is constantly shared and passed through the conversational apparatus. The same sharing extends into the past. The two distinct biographies, as subjectively apprehended by the two individuals who have lived through them, are overruled and reinterpreted in the course of their conversation. Sooner or later, they will "tell all" - or, more correctly, they will tell it in such a way that it fits into the self-definitions objectivated

> in the marital relationship. The couple thus construct not only present reality but reconstruct past reality as well, fabricating a common memory that integrates the recollections of the two individual pasts.

Filtered through the "common memory that integrates the recollections of the two individual pasts" the accounts marriage partners give of their thoughts and actions earlier in their relationship and beyond must be regarded as being less than wholly reliable or wholly valid. Indeed, if the point is carried to its logical conclusion, it becomes possible to argue that very little can be said at all about the past in a relationship from the perspective of the present. As Askham (1976) points out, however, even within marital relationships the maintenance of each individual's sense of identity requires moments of privacy, detachment and personal reflection to set beside the processes which lead to the establishment of a common memory. Nevertheless, without the benefit of longitudinal research or the abandonment of retrospective accounts altogether, one can only make a judgment concerning the likely effect that retrospection has had on the reliability and validity of the data collected.

In the present instance it seemed to be the case, impressionistically, that couples were able at least in some degree in the interview situation to stand back from themselves and recount what had occurred in the past in a seemingly objective manner. One possibility is that their ability to adopt such a stance was related to the relatively high level of educational attainment found in the sample. Some of the more theologically inclined couples were acutely aware of the ways in which their thinking had developed, and there was noticeably in some cases a familiarity with the social sciences and with research which appeared to be reflected in attempts by the couples to render their experiences as accurately as possible.

More specifically, it is also possible to argue that the difficulties brought about by retrospective reinterpretation were somewhat mitigated because the form taken by the interview routinely provided an opportunity to utilize the possibility of obtaining from a joint interview two accounts rather than one. Because partners were asked at the beginning of the interview to give a biographical account, and because there were episodes relating for instance to parental reaction where one participant was involved more than the other, it became natural in the interview to alternate betwen the partners. In these circumstances probes such as "And what were you doing while this was going on?" or "What were you feeling at this time?", used as the switch was made from one partner to the other, gave opportunities for corroboration, supplementation and so on.

Analysis

Just as in other aspects of the research original conceptions and intentions faced modification in the light of exigencies arising in the course of data collection, in consequence the interview study did not escape a reorientation of its dominant concern. As the interviewing of couples proceeded it became increasingly clear that the sample was biassed in particular sorts of ways. Those interviewed were uniformly young, recently married couples, most of whom were university educated and without children. Inevitably courtship loomed large in the accounts they gave of their courtship, and as time proceeded it began to be of more central interest. Patterns of marital adaptation became a relatively minor motif within the more general framework of a study of the process of getting married (an interest further encouraged by a growing awareness of the importance of the Ne Temere decree), the dynamics of courtship and the relations of the couples to those around them, particularly their parents.

The emergence of intermarriage formation demanded a theoretical reorientation. For a long time, however, it was unclear just what the source of their reorientation would be. This was in part because there was very little previous research on this particular aspect of intermarriage (though the significance of this lack was not at first clearly appreciated). Partly, however, two other factors were also important. Firstly, because the sample was relatively homogeneous, it was not possible to exploit internal comparisons in the way that one might have with a larger and more diverse sample. Secondly, and paradoxically, as in Bolton's study the courtship patterns revealed by the interview patterns appeared to be complex and initially at any rate devoid of pattern.

One potential strategy for generating theoretical propositions from the material to hand - that of 'theoretical sampling' (Glaser and Strauss, 1967) - could only be applied with difficulty. Theoretical sampling depends on the existence of a "fluid, interactive relationship" (Denzin, 1970, 83) between emerging theory and the selection of further sample elements. Successive reformulations of theory inform and are informed by the "ongoing inclusion" (Glaser and Strauss, 1967, 50) of groups and situations thought to have comparative relevance for the generation and clarification of conceptual categories. In the Northern Ireland context, however, as already indicated, ethical limits on the logic of ongoing inclusion were generated by the exigencies of working in a conflict situation, and with a potentially vulnerable group. It was necessary that some theoretically relevant contexts remained unexplored for fear of bringing research, researcher and the researched to the attention of the potentially malign.

Furthermore, at another level theoretical sampling seemed almost to be an extravagance where difficulties were being experienced in even obtaining a sufficiently large initial sample of intermarried

couples. The experience of trying to contact intermarried couples suggested that some relevant comparison groups would also prove difficult to reach. This was particularly so, for example, of couples where one partner had converted to the religious faith of the other, and it soon proved to be the case that the interviewed couples were generally unwilling to involve a further and important comparison group - their parents - in the research. As a means of overcoming this particular kind of difficulty, some thought was given to comparing the religiously intermarried in Northern Ireland with those in Great Britain and/or in the United States. However, it eventually came to be felt that if data collection proceeded more smoothly elsewhere, the material gathered might eventually 'swamp' that which was initially of interest - couples in Northern Ireland.

In consequence, as the interviewing proceeded a situation arose in which there was a great deal of material to be analysed although there was no clear idea of how this might be done. During this period there was a more or less constant vacillation between two quite distinct approaches to the interview material. On the one hand, there was a strong temptation to resort to very detailed description which would capture the complexity of the courtship process and remain true to the experiences of the couples themselves, but which would involve relatively little analytic ordering of the material. On the other hand, it also seemed possible to abandon much of the descriptive effort through the expedient of falling back on the kinds of typological formulations common in the existing literature which identify particular features of those entering relationships leading to heterogamous marriages but say little about how the relationships themselves come into being.

In the end, however, this latter approach was abandoned almost entirely. A largely descriptive framework was retained but with a degree of structure which derived from a number of ideas to be found within the labelling tradition in the sociology of deviance. Somewhat remotely perhaps the original source of this reorientation lay in a critique of the theory of intermarriage proposed by Robert Merton in his (1941) article on 'Intermarriage and Social Structure'.

The initial attraction of Merton's work was that the notion of 'compensation' which Merton and Kingsley Davis (1941) had independently proposed as a factor in some kinds of interracial marriage was potentially capable, it seemed, of being developed in a processual manner. Unfortunately, however, those in the sample resolutely failed to show very much that was capable of being taken as evidence for the compensation hypothesis, a fact which may have been related to the relative homogeneity of the sample in terms of social class. Moreover, it also became clear that the argument presented by Merton and Davis was itself flawed. This is partly, as discussed earlier, because the focus is entirely on extrinsic rewards contingent on striking a marriage bargain. The affectional basis of relations, which demands a consideration of other kinds of reward of a more intrinsic nature, was ignored. Secondly, Merton and Davis assume that a functional basis for inmarriage lies in the preservation of harmony within the nuclear-family unit and between that unit and the wider kin group. To do so, however, is to put into question the assumption central to the compensation hypothesis that the pairing of high achieved status and low ascribed status with low achieved status and high ascribed status represents a uniquely favourable combination. This is because Merton and Davis equate rank dissimilarity with cultural dissimilarity. Since in compensatory intermarriage partners differ on both rank dimensions, the

potential costs arising from cultural dissimilarity should be correspondingly greater where relationships are compensatory rather than non-compensatory.

At this juncture Mertonian theory might have been left entirely to its own devices had it not been noticed that 'Intermarriage and Social Structure' stands in a somewhat curious relation to the rest of Merton's work. First of all, although Merton's functionalism often leads him, as Mulkay (1971) points out, in the direction of exchange theory, he has rarely used the notion of exchange in the overall corpus of his work in as explicit a manner as he does in the discussion of compensation in 'Intermarriage and Social Structure'.

One possible reason for the use he makes of an exchange model in relation to intermarriage is that Merton explicitly assumes that Black-White relations in the United States are ordered around dimensions both of class and caste. It is from this assumption that the theory of compensatory intermarriage derives its symmetry and therefore a good part of its plausibility. Once this was clear, however, it was very quickly realised that Merton's work is in fact unusual in its conscious derivation from an underlying model of intergroup relations. The issue which arose in consequence therefore was one of trying to uncover the equivalent but unstated model or models of intergroup relations informing the work of other writers in the area, and of understanding the effect of such models on the conceptualization of intermarriage.

While it was becoming clear that the assumptions underlying most of what had been written on intermarriage had produced not an accidental but a structured lack of interest in courtship, it also became recognized that Merton's treatment of non-compensatory intermarriage was related, as a previous discussion has suggested, to the theory put forward in 'Social Structure and Anomie' (1938), but in an ambiguous

and not fully acknowledged way. The attempt to understand 'Intermarriage and Social Structure' in terms of Merton's wider theory of anomie and deviant behaviour led to the discovery of the extensive critical literature on Mertonian anomie theory, and especially to that critical strand represented in the work of Lemert (1967) and Matza (1969) which leads in the direction of labelling theory.

An understanding of labelling theory was useful in providing a way of thinking about various strands of the research material which had until that time remained unconnected. In the first place, labelling theory provides the basis for an essentially transactional account of the origins of deviant behaviour. In rejecting an assumption of discontinuity of the kind represented in the literature on intermarriage by the structured lack of interest in courtship, labelling theorists have recurrently revealed both the sterility and the implicit appeal to pathology which lie behind dispositional typologies. Secondly, labelling theorists also treat as problematic rule-creation: the attempt by actors to cope with the existence of prescription and proscription and the reactive process itself (Becker, 1963; Plummer, 1979). Treated in this way, each of these aspects was useful in turn for an understanding of different segments of the research material to hand. It was realized for example that the moral enterprise involved in the McCann case had been a vital factor at work in the circumstances which had brought the Ne Temere decree to public prominence. Some of the research on informal reactions to deviance formed a natural focus for the study of parental reaction (Kitsuse, 1962; Kiser, 1974; Briedis, 1975), while certain areas of the considerable amount of empirical research generated from within the labelling perspective, especially in relation to sexual deviance, provided a previously unrevealed basis for making external comparisons with the data collected on interreligious marriage (Briedis, 1975; Rains, 1971; Plummer, 1975; Ponse, 1978; Veevers, 1977).

This last material, too, was important for suggesting that a distinction could be made between 'ironic consequentiality' and 'moral disassociation' as outcomes produced by the potential or actual application of stigma-producing sanctions. Such a distinction is in retrospect a fairly obvious one to make. Its importance was that once it had explicitly emerged it permitted sense to be made of the couples' experiences by drawing attention to the relationship between courtship processes and the ways in which couples dealt with the possibility of stigmatization - a topic which forms a major concern of the chapter which follows.

## Chapter 8 Patterns of Interreligious Courtship

Previous chapters have considered the wider context within which intermarriage in Northern Ireland takes place. In this chapter and those which follow the processes by which a Catholic-Protestant couple in Northern Ireland actually reach marriage are considered, using data from lengthy informal interviews with the 27 recently married Catholic-Protestant couples described earlier. The chapter begins by looking at the initiation of the relationships studied in terms of the settings within which couples met and the ways in which they first became aware that they did not both share the same religious background.

### Initiation: meeting contexts

The sites of first meeting for couples in the sample are given in Table 16. Not surprisingly, given the level of educational attainment in the sample, six of the couples - the largest single group - had met within the precincts of the university: in four cases in the students' union, in one case at classes, and in another through a university society. Clubs of various kinds were mentioned by five couples and were the next most frequent locale within which first meetings had taken place. Three of the couples had met at dances while among the remainder of the sample, comprising about half of those interviewed, initial contact had been made within a number of diverse settings (Table 16).

TABLE 16

Interview sample: site of first meeting

| Site of meeting | No. |
|---|---|
| University | 6 |
| - students' union (4) | |
| - classes (1) | |
| - society (1) | |
| Clubs | 5 |
| - social club (2) | |
| - folk club (2) | |
| - music society (1) | |
| Dance | 3 |
| Party | 2 |
| Course | 2 |
| Holiday | 2 |
| Public Transport | 2 |
| Work | 2 |
| Pub | 1 |
| Sports | 1 |
| 'Blind date' | 1 |

Interesting in itself the list shown in Table 16, like similar lists shown in other studies (Slater and Woodside, 1951; Pierce, 1963; Gorer, 1971) does little more than echo the sentiment expressed in the

old popular song that "love is where you find it". The variability of settings listed in this way tends to obscure what is of most interest - those features which sites of first meeting may or may not have in common as interactional contexts.

It is suggested that meeting contexts vary both in the likelihood which they provide for routinely recurring contact between a particular pair of individuals and in their degree of formal social organization. Dichotomizing both these dimensions, into high and low likelihood of recurrent contact and formal and informal social organization, as in Table 17, yields four types of meeting context. These are the associational context, marketplace context, the relational context and the circumstantial context.[1]

TABLE 17

Typology of meeting contexts

| | | Likelihood of routinely recurring contact | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | High | Low |
| Type of social organization | Formal | associational context | marketplace context |
| | Informal | relational context | circumstantial context |

Associational contexts are those within which "both the man and the woman are forced to relate in some manner by reason of the roles assigned to them by the environmental setting in which they find themselves" (Murstein, 1976, 115). Work and organizational settings and voluntary associations provide the obvious examples of this type of locale.

[1] This classification draws in part on Plummer (1975, 156).

Marketplace contexts are settings formally organized to provide initial cross-sex contact under a sustaining definition that recurrent contact arises out of mutual agreement and is likely to be pursued elsewhere. Such settings, the obvious examples of which are dances, discos and certain kinds of bar, have fairly frequently been described in the literature (Cavan, 1966; Cloyd, 1977; Berk, 1977; Mungham, 1976; and to the homosexual world Warren, 1975; Plummer, 1975) usually with reference to the prevalence of strategic interaction within them or the psychic costs which failure within the setting may engender.[1]

The term 'relational contexts' refers to peer groups, neighbourhood groups and the like which bring couples into contact on the basis of pre-existing informal ties, while circumstantial contexts may be thought of as those circumstances which permit fortuitous and more or less fleeting encounters to occur out of which nevertheless it is possible for courtship relations to grow. Meeting at a bus-stop, as did one of the couples in the sample, provides a good example of a circumstantial context.

Although in a number of cases it was rather difficult to make an unequivocal assignment to a particular category, the initial meeting places of those in the sample were reclassified, by context, as shown in Table 18. Broadly speaking, clubs, courses, work and sports were taken to be associational (although, of course, it is likely that clubs very often have a latent marketplace role). Dances and the pub were placed in the marketplace category, while the party as described was regarded as falling in the relational category. One of the meetings in the university facilities was classed as relational and another as circumstantial; the remainder, it was felt, fell more clearly into

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[1] Mungham, for example, comments "... the end-of-the-dance pick-up situation contains all of the elements of a fascist universe; physical excellence counts for much more than anything else. In this scheme of things the 'plain Janes' have to make their own way ... Their failure is tangible and felt. There is no way of explaining it away." (Mungham, 1976, 98)

the associational category. The circumstances behind one of the holiday meetings was judged to be more relational than circumstantial. The one case of a 'blind date' was placed in the latter category.

TABLE 18

First-meeting context of couples in interview sample

| Meeting context | No. |
|---|---|
| Associational .. .. .. .. .. | 14 |
| Marketplace .. .. .. .. .. | 4 |
| Relational .. .. .. .. .. | 4 |
| Circumstantial .. .. .. .. .. | 5 |
| Total .. .. .. .. .. .. | 27 |

Table 18 shows that in this sample first meetings were overwhelmingly initiated in associational contexts. Among those that were not, approximately equal numbers appeared in each of the other categories. Since the sample is not a representative one it is not, of course, possible to generalize from these figures to intermarried couples at large. However, in the light of previous speculation deriving from the demographic and ecological data shown earlier which seemed to point to the role of the work setting and of non-local contact, one might well hypothesize that a relationship does exist between formally organized meeting contexts and the initiation of heterogamous marriages.

Awareness of difference

The initial meeting having taken place, the question then arises of how it was that couples came to reach an 'open-awareness' (Glaser and Strauss, 1964) of their religious dissimilarity. Accordingly,

each respondent was asked, "How did you first become aware that you were not both of the same religion?" Only Mr Park, Mrs Kearns and Mr Sullivan[1] were at all unable to recall the exact circumstances of the discovery. In the first two cases, the awareness of difference seems to have come about without the individuals concerned quite knowing how. According to Mr Park,

> I don't think there was any point, any particular point in time when it suddenly struck me, you know, "Kathy's a Catholic". I think probably after I went up to her home a few times and Kathy came down. I think we both just knew, something we said in conversation with someone else or with each other.

While in a not dissimilar vein Mrs Kearns commented as follows:

> I can't remember when it was. I can't put my finger on how I discovered it. I probably found out he wasn't a Catholic, not so much that he was a Protestant, if you know what I mean.

Mr Sullivan, on the other hand, seems to have been largely indifferent to the religious identity of his partner and to have both resisted and deprecated any conscious attempt to discern even that a difference existed. As he put it,

> It (the religious difference) is not the first thing I would think of. I was more interested in her education and her background and the fact that she'd been at university in England. You have to educate yourself out of the society.

Mr Sullivan in particular seems to have been something of an exceptional case in this regard. More usually, informants were able to point quite clearly to the use they had made of certain cues as a basis for ascertaining their future partner's religious background. Using cues in this way is, in fact, a common practice in Northern Ireland.[2]

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[1] These are, of course, pseudonyms.

[2] For more general accounts of this in Northern Ireland, see Harris (1972, 148); Barritt and Carter (1972, cp.4); Burton (1978, cp.2). For the cues used in cases of Jewish-Gentile courtship, see Mayer (1961, 37-44).

Individuals may, for example, be marked off as being Catholic by virtue of having a name, particularly a forename, which is Gaelic in origin (Seamus, for example) or which has some devotional significance (say, Bernadette). Certain English or Scottish names (Ian, for instance) are more likely, on the other hand, to be associated with Protestants. Again, since Protestants and Catholics are educated separately in Northern Ireland, the kind of school a person attends or has attended is in the vast majority of cases a good indicator of his or her religious background. In other instances a knowledge of patterns of residential segregation may sometimes allow the religion of another to be guessed from the locality in which he or she lives, while the presumed tendency for primary relations to be religiously homogeneous anyway may also provide useful clues to an individual's religious identity.

In consequence one can find, for instance, in the sample Mr Tynan being quite sure that his future wife was a Catholic simply from knowing the religious composition of the part of the city in which she lived:

> Well, she said she was from _____. As soon as she said that I knew she was a Catholic.

According to Mrs Cunningham,

> I knew from his name. It just never occurred to me that he was anything else than a Protestant with a name like that.

Mr Fannin, a Catholic professional man, on the other hand, could take his cue from the nature of the friendship network itself,

> I would have been very surprised if she had been of the same religion. The majority of people I associated with were not.

Mr Shaw remembered that his wife had at some point mentioned having been at a convent school, while in the case of Mr and Mrs Clark the

signs in fact were quite visible since they had met as they travelled on the bus to school each morning with their badges and uniforms serving directly to indicate the school and therefore the group to which they each belonged.

In other cases the cues were much less inferential. Open awareness of difference arose for three couples because the Catholic party mentioned going to mass. Two other couples met through activities related to ecumenical organizations where it was quite clear just who belonged to which religious tradition, and in two further cases, where introductions were effected through some third party, the fact of religious difference was regarded as an indispensable piece of information. Thus Mr Taylor, when asked to go along on the 'double date' where he met his wife, was told by his companion to remember that "they are Catholics, so don't say anything" (controversial). Similarly, when Mr Ferguson tried to arrange an introduction to his future wife through a mutual friend, he was asked, "Do you know she's a Catholic?"

Mrs McLaughlin was unfortunate in a sense because of the initial ambiguity of the cues she was receiving. Like Mr Fannin she was aware of the tendency for religious homeogeneity in networks, yet another important cue "didn't quite fit". This led in the end to the need for a leading question.

> ... I remember when G. (a Catholic friend who lived next door) first started talking about Eric. I was a bit bemused by the name, because it's not a Catholic name and yet her friends all tended to be Catholics, at least until she started working, so I was puzzled for a short time, but I didn't really know him that well. Nevertheless, the fact was that you wanted to get to know about everybody really, and everybody has to be put into one or the other. (Q. Do you remember how it came about that you could fit him in?) I think I asked him a leading question. (Q. What was that?) I can't remember what it was but I do remember asking him one day, to find out. I asked him some leading question and he said, "Well, you being a Protestant ...", implying that he wasn't.

The need to put everyone "into one or the other" means of course that frequently both individuals are not only aware of what constitutes a leading question, but also of the possible grounds for its being asked. Not surprisingly, then, a certain tension often surrounds the display of cues, especially in 'marketplace' settings. In the Warrens' case, for instance, both partners were unwilling to volunteer their names, because they each feared that the other would attempt to terminate the encounter. "So many times", said Mrs Warren, "you'd be dancing with someone and as soon as they found out your name they would just lose interest". In this context too it is worth also noting the report given by Mrs Jamieson:

> I can remember the third evening we went out together, I had been up to his digs and we were standing in the door, and he sort of whispered in my ear, very casually and very subtly - I don't know how he worked it in - "What school were you at?", and I thought to myself, "Here we go again!", because this used to be the line, it used to be the first question on the dance floor and I know my sister was asked by one young man "What school did you go to?" and when she told him he left her on the dance-floor and walked away, without wanting to know anything more about her. Anyway, he asked me that night and I remember sniggering and running down the steps and saying "_____ College".

None of the individuals in the sample seems to have made any such attempt to 'cool out' (Goffman, 1952) the other partner on learning of his or her religious background. Rather, the relationships continued - in some cases, as is seen later, with their romantic potential being perceived very quickly indeed. In fact, only one or two partners could be found who were prepared at least to admit that they had ever questioned the advisability of continuing with the relationship. There seems, for instance, to have been some initial uneasiness on the part of Mr Courtney as a result of recognizing very early on the possibility of his parents' negative reaction. In his

own words,

> I was definitely disappointed because I knew even at that stage that my parents wouldn't be pleased about it. I was a bit let down because I thought "how nice it would be, how simple" (if she were a Catholic).

Similarly, as described later, Mrs Jamieson seems to have been saddened if only for a time by the fact that the relationship with someone to whom she felt a strong attraction should be complicated by his being Protestant. The sort of prolonged and principled reluctance even to countenance the possibility of out-marriage such as is described by Levinson and Levinson (1958) and Mayer (1961) in their studies of Jewish-Gentile courtship appears, however, to be almost entirely absent from the present sample.

The lack of active preference for an out-group partner

If reluctance was not a feature of the relationships discussed so far, an alternative possibility might well be that individuals had brought instead to their relationships an active preference for a potential marriage partner who was an out-group member. Out-group members might be preferred, for example, on the basis of beliefs about their sexual prowess or availability, in the expectation that any eventual marriage might bring with it the possibility of status enhancement, or perhaps because the relationship might in itself provide the individual with an opportunity to signal his rejection of previous within-group relationships. Evidence which might suggest the operation of preference based on such factors is, however, generally lacking in the sample.

Respondents were asked, for example, whether they were aware of any beliefs circulating within their own group to the effect that members of the 'other' group were in any sense morally or sexually lax. In general, two sets of replies were obtained in response. One group

of respondents - the very much smaller of the two - denied the existence of any such beliefs at all. Mr Park, for instance, said:

> I don't think there's anything in it. Let's say I've never heard anything like that before and let's say if there probably had been any (laughs) relevance in it, I would have heard about it.

Other couples, however, affirmed the existence of sexual mythologies in Northern Ireland but suggested that the most prevalent was based on the supposition that Catholics were the more 'moral', that they were less promiscuous and even, indeed, that they were 'frigid'. One wife, for instance, claimed that her husband's father had told her that "it was a well-known fact that Catholic girls had higher moral standards". Mr Cunningham did point out that some Protestants would feel that the institution of confession provided Catholics with something of a licence to sin in that "you could do something and then go to confession and then it would be alright". At the same time though he could also say:

> ... there's the other sort of thing, you know, Catholic girls keep their legs crossed.

Interestingly in this connection, reference seems to have been made largely to Catholic females. Catholic men were rarely mentioned - an indication perhaps that there is little fear of sexual aggression from Catholic males towards Protestant females.[1] Further, the converse of the sorts of statements just mentioned, that Protestants would tend to be more promiscuous than Catholics, was not stated in very strong terms. One Catholic wife said,

> I suppose I would have heard Catholic boys say that it was easier to get off with a Protestant girl, but these are things you hear in your teens and you tend to forget about them;

while another quite expressly believed that Protestant men were in fact

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[1] See also Harris (1971, 171).

much less concerned with sexual intimacy than were Catholic men:

> Protestant boys were much better about that than the Catholic ones. One found with Catholic boys that the emphasis was very much on a quick sexual side to the relationship ...

This last remark provides the only suggestion - and it is an implicit one at that - that the sexual predelictions of those who are not co-religionists might serve as a basis for preferring their company, and in this case it is the avoidance of sexual advantage which is important. Within relationships, of course, individuals may have adjusted their assessment of the potentiality for sexual gain once the difference in the partners' religious backgrounds was discovered. Because of its sensitive nature the issue was not pursued to any great extent in the interview situation and therefore little can be said about it. What does appear to be fairly clear, however, is that what Herton (1970, 62) calls "a socio-sexually induced predisposition" towards intimate relations with those in the out-group appears hardly to be a factor of major importance in Northern Ireland.

In certain kinds of situation intermarriage might come to be regarded as a preferred option bringing with it some possibility of economic or social advancement.[1] Preferences based on this sort of reasoning, though, appear not to figure to any very substantial degree in the present sample. Perhaps the nearest one comes to seeing anything of this sort was in those cases involving Mr Fannin and Mrs Shaw.

Both Catholic, each had brought to the relationship a clear set of <u>desiderata</u> concerning the qualities s/he would hope to find in a future mate. As Mr Fannin recalled,

> I had spent some considerable time looking for someone who was prepared to listen to me, meet with friends that I know who are not on a particularly high intellectual plane but at the same time have a certain degree of pretension about them, you know, and she just seemed to fit the bill very well.

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[1] The references once again are Merton (1941); Davis (1941); Van den Berghe (1960).

Mrs Shaw, on the other hand, strongly valued politeness and quiet demeanour - qualities she found readily in Mr Shaw, but more lacking in other young men of her acquaintance. Neither of these individuals, it must be said, linked their choice of partner specifically to the fact that the other was a Protestant. There seems no reason to suggest, in fact, that a Catholic partner who did "fit the bill" for either of them would have been rejected. Mrs Shaw does seem, however, to have had at least a general preference for relationships with Protestant men since in her view:

> I always found them much more respectful, much more respect for the girl, much better mannered and they watched their language carefully ... Catholic boys seemed to think it was manly to use bad language in front of a girl.

In Mr Fannin's case such a general preference was rather less clearly seen. Nevertheless, he did stress several times during the interview that most of his friends were Protestant and his desire for his wife to be able to act appropriately in his social setting appears to have been a strong one.

The important thing in both these cases as far as one can see, however, seems to be the demeanour of the other partner. (On demeanour generally, see Goffman, 1956.) So, while it is possible to suspect that in becoming aware of the future partner's religious background each respondent here could feel assured of behaviour which would match, or at least not diminish, his/her social status, one has little sense of any particular gain being involved, nor does any form of 'compensation' (Merton, 1941) seem to be taking place.[1] In other words, just as the preference for a partner from outside one's own group in the hope of gaining sexual favours did not appear to be important in encouraging interreligious courtship among the couples studied, neither did the prospect of economic or social gain appear to have encouraged informants to cross group boundaries in search of a mate.

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[1] This is not to say, of course, that compensation might never be a factor in interfaith courtships in Northern Ireland. The absence of compensation in the present sample may possibly result from the extent to which there is already within it a good deal of class homogeneity.

As noted earlier, Freeman (1955) has suggested that a significant factor encouraging interethnic courtship in Hawaii is the rejection of previous unsatisfactory in-group involvements especially with parents in favour of a growing identification with an out-group and the idealization of its culture. Although there is some evidence in the sample of individuals who had distanced themselves decisively from the group in which they had been brought up, there seems little evidence of the specific kinds of process which Freeman describes.

In one or two cases on the Protestant side, entering a relationship with a Roman Catholic was seen as providing an opportunity to make a gesture of rebellion, usually against parents. Mrs Courtney, for instance, had little of the hesitancy about entering the relationship we saw her husband displaying earlier. As she put it,

> I think in a way I was rather pleased. I sort of wanted to rebel in a way. I really think I was rather pleased that Richard was a Catholic. In fact, I remember I thought "at last you've done something".

For Mr Warren, "going out with a Catholic was a bit of an attraction, something daring", while Mrs McLaughlin, echoing Mrs Courtney's comment, was able to remark that,

> I think at the time I was quite pleased to be going out with a Catholic. I quite liked the idea of sort of rather going out with a Black man or a Catholic and the Catholic was less severe. (Laughs.)

These, however, all seem to have been judgments that were made after the courtships had already begun, to have been relatively fleeting in character and to have represented something rather more like bravado than the sort of process described by Freeman.

In fact, one suspects that it might be relatively difficult in Northern Ireland to discover individuals, like those described by

Freeman in Hawaii, for whom entrance to a courtship with an out-group member represents a rejection of earlier and unsatisfactory in-group ties. In the circumstances Freeman is describing it appears that the large number of ethnic groups and the relative accessibility of their membership and their culture make the sort of processes involved far from difficult to accomplish. Such conditions, of course, appear to be very different from those to be found in Northern Ireland, though it is possible to speculate that a sample of couples which had included couples in which one partner had converted to the faith of the other might have included some instances in which courtship had been a product of the rejection of in-group ties.

Courtship processes

It seems then that a number of the factors which have been identified previously as predisposing individuals to intermarry - the rejection of in-group ties or the desire for sexual or status gain - play a relatively minor role among the Protestant-Catholic couples interviewed for the present study. Insofar as they operate at all it is as an element, usually fleeting, at work in the establishment of the relationship. Attention now turns to the wider processes at work in these relationships which enabled those in the sample to proceed through courtship to marriage. In line with a previous discussion the focus here is on how couples established their relationships, the patterns of adjustment arising in the wake of progressive self-disclosure and the primary means by which couples accomplished the suppression or neutralization of stigmatizing labels. For descriptive convenience, five groups of couples have been distinguished each of which represents a particular configuration of these three elements.

Group I This is the largest of the five groups made up in all of

twelve couples.[1] Reflecting a generally high level of educational attainment within the group the mean age of marriage for men in this group was twenty-four and twenty-three for women. Of the twenty-four individuals in the group only five had actually grown up in Belfast. The others tended to come primarily from medium-sized towns in the north and east of Northern Ireland, with three of the individuals coming from Derry City. In nearly every case those individuals who were not from Belfast had come there to attend Queen's University and had met their future spouse during the period of their studies.

There appears to have been no simple pattern to the way in which the couples in this group established their relationship. Some couples formed a relationship very quickly indeed. The Kearns, for instance, "just hit it off very well", as did the Taylors. The Curries had only known each other for a few months before deciding to become engaged, while Mr Fannin had felt able to propose after only three weeks had passed. With other couples - Mr and Mrs Courtney, the Kings, Mr and Mrs Wilson or the Warrens - on the other hand, the relationships seem to have developed at a more moderate pace and to have followed a fairly conventional sequence in which a dating relationship was followed by a phase of "going steady", which in turn gave way to the engagement period. In these cases the establishment of the relationship depends on the process referred to by Bolton (1961) as the "involvement escalator". Bolton (1961, 238) uses the term 'escalator' "to indicate the fact that certain types of action-sequences seem to have a built-in momentum such that, once the individual takes the first step, he is carried along toward a final commitment to marriage". Here a marriage-directed commitment is eventually built up through the enmeshing of the partners' short-term activities and long-term plans; something which, for a number of these couples, the university context seems not unnaturally to have encouraged.

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[1] The couples are: C-P (Catholic husband-Protestant wife): the Courtneys, the Coyles, the Curries, the Fannins, the McLaughlins and the Sullivans; P-C (Protestant husband-Catholic wife): the Kearns, the Kings, the Shaws, the Taylors, the Warrens and the Wilsons.

In one or two other cases it also seemed to happen that the enmeshing of the partners' daily activities could lead to a situation in which the pair developed a reciprocal emotional dependence upon each other, without, however, an explicit commitment to marry being made. This seemed to be true for both the Coyles and the McLaughlins. In both these instances, the initial relationships were lengthy but retained a rather 'platonic' character despite the partners spending much of their time together and becoming confidants. It was only, finally, when the male partner in each case passed through a personal crisis unconnected with the relationship that a more 'romantic' liaison seems to have developed, with relatively little time elapsing then before the decision to marry had been reached.[1]

At first sight it seems as if the most obvious feature of these relationships was that they had been established by couples who resembled closely in their socio-economic characteristics and socio-political attitudes those frequently alluded to in the literature on intermarriage as 'emancipated' (Merton, 1941; Slotkin, 1942; Levinson and Levinson, 1958; Golden, 1959; Cottrell, 1971; Wolf, 1971). Thus, the general level of educational and occupational attainment among these couples is high. Nine of the husbands and seven of the wives are graduates with three men and one woman having, in addition, postgraduate qualifications. Of the non-graduate men, only one is employed in a non-manual occupation; the other two were still students at the time of interview.

The espousal of left-wing political ideologies was not uncommon for those found in this portion of the sample. In a number of cases courtship had proceeded against the background of the civil rights agitation in Northern Ireland in the late 1960s and it was usual for these

[1]The process involved in these cases seems to come close to that described by Bolton (1961) as the 'addiction escalator'.

individuals to point to their having been involved in the protests which had taken place at that time. In other cases couples would indicate their support for the non-sectarian political groupings in Northern Ireland such as the Alliance Party with comments such as "we're both terribly moderate" or "we wouldn't want to be associated with the extremes".

These were sentiments which in a more general way also characterized these couples' attitudes towards interaction across the religious divide in Northern Ireland. Indeed, interestingly, with only a word or two changed to fit the new context, the detailed description offered by Levinson and Levinson (1958, 119-20) of the 'emancipated' Jewish partners in the relationships which they studied would appear to form a largely valid description of the individuals, Protestant and Catholic, who make up those presently under discussion:

> To them the distinction between Jew and Gentile is not fundamental or even of special importance. ... Ideologically this group is not opposed to intermarriage. Most of them claim that ethnicity was irrelevant to them in their dating and in their marital plans. They had no interest in the partner's religious and social background; it was important only that the other person be attractive and congenial in values, interests and temperament. ... Their ethnic orientation is primarily "desegregating" in the sense that they object to all barriers between groups and to restrictions on individual freedom of choice.

Couples looking back on their courtships, for example, frequently cited the importance, especially to the formative stages of the relationship, of interests or involvements they had had in common, or seemed to indicate in a more general way the extent to which they had found each other (to use the Levinsons' phrase) "attractive and congenial in values, interests and temperament". Some like the Sullivans or the McLaughlins, for instance, found that they had intellectual

interests in common. Both Mr and Mrs Wilson were keen golfers, the Kings were deeply involved in musical activities, and Mrs Taylor could recall how,

> ... we just seemed to have a hell of a lot in common at that time (the beginning of the courtship), we were both keen on cars and dances and we used to go fishing together.

Rather less specifically, couples like the Shaws or Mr and Mrs Kearns were also able to comment on how alike they felt themselves to be in their attitudes and values - something expressed, too, in Mr Courtney's comment that,

> ... we're very similar in outlook and in the kinds of things we do and we always have been very close to one another.

Further, the couples here were sure that the putative difference in religion between the partners had been of little direct consequence to the relationship. Mr McLaughlin recalled, for example, that

> I didn't at any time say to myself, "I can't fall into this Protestant trap", you know, the question of religion was quite irrelevant.

For others, the fact of the partners having different religious backgrounds "didn't really matter" or "never entered in". The 'mixed' nature of their relationship "was never a problem" or else to quote Mrs Courtney's rather eloquent comment:

> I shared so much of my life with Richard. There were so many aspects that we shared, the one thing we didn't share happened to take place on a Sunday morning and it never loomed as so tremendously important.[1]

It is evident that the intermarrying individuals presently under discussion also display a "desegregating orientation" similar to that which Levinson and Levinson describe for their Jewish-Gentile couples. In the present sample the circumstances which gave rise to such an orientation on the part of a particular respondent vary.

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[1] To a certain extent Mrs Courtney is being rhetorical in her reference to Sunday morning. She had ceased church attendance in her teens, while Mr Courtney was a very irregular attender at Sunday mass.

One needs to make this point because in one particular regard the Levinsons' work is potentially misleading. In their discussion Levinson and Levinson describe only their Jewish respondents. Given the concern in the American literature to understand intermarriage as a product of the attenuation of group ties they focus in particular on the way in which these Jewish respondents had distanced themselves in a decisive manner from their earlier religio-ethnic background (Levinson and Levinson, 1958, 119):

> All of these persons were "marginal" members of the Jewish group long before intermarriage. They seldom observed traditional Jewish customs and rarely participated in specifically Jewish religious or communal activities. In religious outlook, they are agnostic or are religious in a completely individualistic sense without commitment to institutional religion. In short they have a relatively weak sense of Jewish identity and consider themselves largely 'emancipated' from traditional Jewish forms.

It is not entirely clear from the Levinsons' description, however, whether this kind of distancing process was a pattern occurring uniformly throughout the sample or whether it was characteristic only of the Jewish partners. Since the Gentile partners are not described in any detail, one can only rely on a number of passing comments which seem to suggest that their experiences were at least in some instances dissimilar.

In any event, in the case of the couples studied in Northern Ireland a process similar to that just described was only to be seen among the Catholic men in the sample. The decisive rejection of earlier socialization typical of the Levinsons' informants was not true for the Catholic women interviewed, nor was it, except in one or two cases, a characteristic of the Protestants in the sample - male or female. What is common to these individuals, however, is that they

had apparently without exception developed a model of their social environment which permitted them to characterize the styles of thought and conduct of those around them as rigid and hermetic, on the one hand, and as unrestrainedly aggressive on the other. Thus, while all of the Catholic men in the sample had experienced a relatively early and quite decisive reaction against the Catholic upbringing they had received, it was either because, like Mr Currie or Mr Fannin, they came to regard Catholicism as "dogmatic" or "30, 40, maybe even 50 years behind the times", or else it was the result of what they perceived as the narrow and inhibiting component in the Catholic schooling they had been given. In this latter category, it is possible to find, for example, Mr Coyle who spoke of his "conscious rejection" of his Catholic upbringing during adolescence, pointing in particular to how,

> ... during my schooldays I developed a marked antipathy towards the Irish Christian Brothers and more particularly their brand of dogmatic Irish Catholicism, as well as with its heavy overtones of Irish Catholic Nationalism, and the Christian Brothers were in no way sympathetic to the socialist ideas I chose to adopt

while, in a similar vein, Mr Sullivan spoke of his time at university as a "withdrawal process" from a schooling that was "repressive, God-oriented and with no attempt to teach you how to live".

On the Protestant side only Mr Warren and Mrs Sullivan seem to have undergone similar experiences. Mr Warren had concluded while researching a thesis on the topic that all the churches in Ireland, including the one to which he nominally belonged, had a negative political and social role deriving from a "particular streak of puritanism" which he found offensive. In Mrs Sullivan's case, a variety of circumstances including working in an institution which she felt discriminated against Catholics and boarding in a Catholic household, gave her a "completely different view of Northern Ireland"

and led her to take part in the civil rights campaign which was then taking place. More generally, on the other hand, the Protestant partners had come from homes which were effectively a-religious or in which parental religious involvement reflected more clearly conventionality rather than conviction. In the case of the Catholic women most had remained devotionally active, though some divergence was apparent between their own views and those of the Catholic Church on matters like birth-control.

What does seem to be striking about these individuals, however, is that there seems to have been relatively little awareness on their part of the in-group/out-group aspects of religious identity in Northern Ireland. The majority of them had, by virtue of social class or geography, grown up in areas numerically dominated by members of one group - usually their own. Members of the 'other' group in these situations seem hardly to have been visible at all or else were few enough in number not apparently to be considered a threat. Community relations in these areas as a result tended to remain good,[1] and in consequence it seems to have been possible for someone like Mrs Wilson, for instance, to speak of "not taking in differences of religion". In these cases the existence of religious differences and divisions was portrayed as an alien or unsuspected feature of Northern Irish society which had remained so until events had forced them into consciousness. As Mr Kearns rather nicely put it,

> It's only in the last four or five years that one has become, at least that I have become aware of the difference between Catholics and Protestants. Maybe before I assumed everybody was Protestant. ... before we got married I didn't have any concrete attitudes towards religion. There wasn't any trouble at that time so there was no stimulus to take a strong line on anything. If I hadn't met Maureen I don't know how I would have reacted to the Catholic-Protestant conflict, whether I would have taken the Protestant viewpoint or not.

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[1] The inverse relationship between inter-group contact and hostility in Northern Ireland has been pointed to by Harris (1972, 182-3).

Mr King, too, explained how the deteriorating situation in Northern Ireland led to his first becoming aware of the development of hostile attitudes:

> ... it was really only just before I met Anna that it began to filter in that things weren't right. I never really liked school and the one thing I did begin to notice about it was that the attitude towards Catholics began to harden, that they were all bombers and I.R.A. men, you know, once the troubles started. So that was really when I started using music as a way out of school life so I wouldn't have to be involved in anything like that.

There is an indication, too, that at least for some of the Protestants who had grown up in Belfast, actions which might be considered aggressive or discriminatory were considered to have lower-class connotations.[1] Thus, Mr King described his parents' and his own political views as being "on the watery side of Unionism, more like respectable Alliance". Mrs Sullivan pointed out that the Orange Order was ill-regarded in her home for being "so rabblish", while Mrs Courtney observed that,

> I hadn't any bitterness or bigotry because the secondary school I went to was very middle-class and anything that I might have had from primary school was wiped out at grammar school.[2]

It is not difficult to see how the perception of religious institutions in Northern Ireland as narrow, puritanical or dogmatic could be extended in the direction of a generally negative evaluation of Northern Irish society as a whole. Certainly the individuals in question here seem all to have regarded Northern Ireland as a society in which existed, in their view, an obsessionally narrow preoccupation with religious differences and divisions. This was something uncongenial, for instance, to someone like Mr Coyle with his avowedly socialist views or to Mr Courtney who was involved at the time of his

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[1] For parallels in 'Ballybeg' see Harris (1972, 167, 195).

[2] Emphases added.

courtship in the radical People's Democracy movement. It could find expression, too, in Mr Sullivan's rather exasperated observation that,

> ... it's rididulous, the highest proportion of church attenders in the United Kingdom and the highest proportion of bigotry; film censorship; playgrounds shut on Sundays

or in Mr Warren's complaint to the effect that,

> I resent being rubber-stamped as a Protestant, that what I do has to be interpreted in that way - I can't feel responsible for the society we have in Northern Ireland.

It is suggested that the importance of this deeply felt and unflattering perception of the nature of Northern Irish society lies beyond simply the development of an openness towards intermarriage on the part of these couples. Rather, it forms one element of a justificatory ideology which permits couples to maintain definitions of self-worth and of the legitimacy of their relationships in the face of the negative appraisals which potentially may be attached to them.

The basis of this ideology lies in the ability of couples to develop and sustain a definition of their relationship based on the disjunction which they perceive between the character of the courtship relation and the way in which they define the wider Northern Irish society. Of some importance in this regard is the perception by the couples of the generally non-contentious nature of their relationship. Indeed, the absence from their relationships of disharmony caused by the partners' differing backgrounds was something which couples tended to stress. Mr Kearns, speaking of his marriage, but also looking back to his courtship, rather nicely made the point, for example, that,

> ... as far as we're concerned there has been no bitterness or nastiness or hatred due to the fact that this is a mixed marriage; we get on just as well now as we did before we were married,

while in a number of other cases couples pointed to the harmonious

character of their relationship even before the interview had begun. There had been no intention expressed to couples of dealing in the interview with problems or difficulties which they may have had. Nothing of this kind was suggested to the intermediaries who arranged the interviews, nor was it indicated as an area of interest in the preamble to the interview itself. The couples were told only that "I'm interested in talking to couples like yourself about your experiences of courtship and marriage". Nevertheless, most of these couples seemed to assume that problems or difficulties were to be the primary area of interest, for with some frequency they would preface their willingness to proceed with the interview with some comment such as,

> O.K., we'll do it, but we may not really be of much use to you, we haven't had any troubles.

Given the partners' backgrounds, the kinds of socio-political attitudes which they brought to the relationship and levels of religious involvement which were either low in both cases or were in the culturally approved direction of greater participation by the female, it is hardly surprising to find that extensive conflict did not emerge in these relationships. What began to be noticed, however, was that couples seemed to view the absence of disharmony in ways which allowed them to maintain within their relationships a sense of what one might call a 'contrastive normality'. In other words, they developed and sustained as the courtship proceeded a definition of the normalness and rightness of the social and moral world inside the relationship by defining that world against the image they have developed of the styles of thought and conduct characteristic of the world outside its boundary.

There seemed to be two aspects to this. In the first place

the absence of attributes associated with divisive viewpoints or involvements allowed individuals in the sample to make a distinction which favourably compared their partner with the membership of those wider social categories seen by the couples to embody styles of thought and conduct which they devalued. This is something which seems to lie behind the comments of Mrs Kearns, for example, who found it objectionable that the blanket terms 'Catholic' and 'Protestant' could be used in ways which bracketed her husband with others more extreme. As she put it,

> The thing that annoys me is the way people use this 'Protestant' and 'Catholic' thing. Like people will use the word 'Protestant' for a real Unionist or 'Catholic' for an I.R.A. man. People give off (complain) about Protestants but, like my husband, is one of them.

What seems to have followed from this is that couples could apparently juxtapose these elements - the partner's characteristics and those of others in devalued social categories - in a way which seemed to aid the development of the relationship. In some cases this seems to have meant that the continuation of the relationship was linked, hypothetically at least, to what was perceived to be the unbridgeable distance between the partner and those whom the couples regarded with disfavour for their rigidity or aggression. So Mrs Coyle, under some pressure from her parents to terminate the relationship, for instance, was willing for it to continue at least in part because,

> I knew in my own mind there was no possibility of Joe joining the I.R.A., so I would never have to worry about anything like that.

While Mr Courtney, speaking of the beginning of his courtship, commented that,

> I think if I had been totally involved in my religion Diane would have been totally bemused - how could it possibly be?

Additionally, couples took the harmonious nature of their courtships to be an indication of the natural and conventional character of the relationship. They tended therefore to speak of it as having "proceeded in the ordinary way" or of having had an uneventful development, as having taken place "without any bother". "The whole thing", as one respondent remarked, "was far less traumatic than you might think". If interreligious courtship or marriage was problematic it was because those outside the relationship chose from ignorance or malice to define it so. Couples, therefore, could make comments like that of Mr Warren that "if you're mixed it throws people, they can't quite believe it". Or else they would suggest, as did a number of couples, that the interreligious character of their relationship would excite no comment or interest "if we were anywhere else but in Northern Ireland" or that "if we were living outside this country it would be a different kettle of fish".

The notion of contrastive normality is one that is advanced only tentatively. In the earlier stages of the research the most significant feature of these relationships seemed to be their similarity to the emancipated couples described in the literature. It was only late in the day, when it began to be noticed that the pattern mentioned earlier was emerging in the spontaneous comments made by couples prior to the interview, that the idea that there was in these relationships a justificatory ideology based on the contrast between the interior of the relationship and its social environment began to emerge. If such an ideology is at work in these relationships one can note that it involves elements both of conventionalization and aristocritization. The former, it will be remembered, allows those in deviant relationships to counter the application of potentially stigmatizing labels by stressing the conventional aspects of the situation at the expense of those which are less conventional. Aristocritization, on

the other hand, refers to a process whereby the external definitions of an activity as deviant are discounted through an appeal to the superior qualities and attributes of those who engage in it. Couples here were in a position both to point to the normal character of their relationship, the evidence for which was a lack of conflict in the relationship, and to assure themselves that they displayed relational and cognitive attributes which bore favourable comparison with the styles of thought and conduct of those they felt to be their detractors.

Group II This in many ways quite striking group is made up of a small number of couples in the sample - the Beggs, the McQuillans, the Boyles, the Lavertys - who showed a dominant interest in religious belief, practice and theology. All of these couples are professionals, well educated and articulate, and in each case they spend much of their time discussing religious matters and their own similarities and differences.

Of the four couples, three (the Beggs, the McQuillans and the Boyles) might fairly be designated 'ecumenical couples'. That is, one finds in the accounts they give of their courtships evidence of a deep and common interest in and a feeling for religious belief and its place in the world, an appeal by the couple to their "basic" and common Christianity and a sharing of discussion, voluntary activity, prayer and worship. This makes them an interesting group because although such couples have been mentioned previously in the literature (Bescanceney, 1970, Barron, 1972) and have been pointed to as a new development, they have not been described in any detail.[1]

Each of these three couples had met initially through activities they had had in common: the McQuillans when they were both participants on a short course; the Beggs by becoming office-

[1] For a more general account of the ecumenical movement at the institutional level, see Berger (1969); Wilson (1969); Gill (1975). Descriptions of the local level can be found in Fichter (1974); Hebblethwaite (1975).

holders in an interdenominational organization; and the Boyles through a mutual interest in badminton. The relationships themselves did not develop in any uniform way. With both Mr and Mrs Beggs and Mr and Mrs Boyle the relationship began slowly. The Boyles met frequently at tournaments and then, as they became friendlier, at interdenominational events before "going out together". The Beggs were increasingly brought together by their shared organizational activities to the extent that, eventually, it was "an emotional relationship that was developing out of that".

With the McQuillans, however, involvement came much more quickly, although in many ways their relationship was handicapped by the fact of their both being engaged in community work in rather 'sensitive' areas such that "we'd hardly met during all that time". Nevertheless, they had talked of marriage after only a few meetings and indeed, although they had intended to wait "for about three years", "it turned out to be less than three months".

These couples seem to have brought to their relationships a large measure of agreement. This was something that was apparent for example to the McQuillans despite the short period of time they had known each other. As Mr McQuillan put it, "In all the conversations we had about that time, all the writing we did to one another, there seemed to be very little we disagreed about in our relationship". Where there were areas of disagreement they appeared to arise from marginal differences emerging out of institutional variations in the interpretation of Christian doctrine. This was in fact a point which Mrs McQuillan made with her comment that if there were differences in their relationship they derived from the partners' respective denominational traditions rather than from their individual positions:

> ... there might be different ways of looking at things but that is at the church level, you see, because at the personal level we might agree on certain things.

This was a viewpoint shared by the other two couples, and echoed strongly by Mrs Beggs who explained that,

> In terms of our Christianity, our Christian views are more or less the same. We come from different theological backgrounds so we've got to work out how different - how the differences we have work into this. We recognize there are certain points of view which are different but on the whole we actually agree a lot about our religion, our belief in God, the way it affects our lives, these sorts of things.

While Mr Boyle commented that,

> ... our different backgrounds weren't a barrier as far as we were concerned. We found there was something positive in our respective backgrounds.

What one seems to be seeing here are a set of rules of 'dialogue' and 'receptivity' which the couples use for dealing with the marginal differences which emerge in their relationship. In other words, by 'working things out' and by 'finding something positive' in each other's background couples ensured that their respective ideas on religious matters were communicated without recourse to traditional polemical or apologetic positions, and that they detected in those ideas themes and core beliefs central to Christianity which could be shared. By operating in this manner couples were able quite explicitly to transform the beliefs and values which they brought to the relationship (which were in any case already similar) into a consensual framework which for them expressed in a symbolic manner the unity of all Christians.

One can see this clearly, for example, in the efforts couples made to give to their relationships a common ritual and devotional focus through joint prayer and worship.[1] The case for this was

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[1] This was difficult for the McQuillans. The circumstances of their courtship were such that joint church attendance, for example, only became frequent for them after marriage. The distinction between the ritual and the devotional is taken from Stark and Glock (1968) and refers on the one hand to the public aspects of religious practice and on the other to its private aspects.

put eloquently by Mr Beggs (who again, one can note, stresses the importance of "working things out" instead of "haggling" over them):

> We decided we wanted to get married, we decided there was no reason why we shouldn't get married. There was no reason why our Christian faith should stand between us in marriage. Therefore Pamela's Presbyterianism and my Catholicism must be compatible in some way in marriage. It was up to us to find a way in which these could be worked out together in equality and in a Christian way, not as a matter of haggling for my interest against hers. I think we decided just to practise Christianity together in any way we could, by praying together privately and by going to church together.

In fact, it seems, couples had little difficulty in praying together privately. Said Mr Boyle, for example,

> I was brought up in this sort of Irish Catholic tradition where you have all these set prayers which we all had to learn as children and which you just sort of trot out on every conceivable occasion. So I found the Protestant tradition which has a more free tendency, more freedom of expression in prayer, very rewarding. It's becoming much more acceptable in the Catholic tradition now, and that along with the prayers we both have, like the Lord's Prayer, means we don't have too much difficulty in praying together.

Joint church attendance did, however, make some additional demands. Both Mr Boyle and Mr Beggs, for example, found the "dryness" and the "staidness" of the Non-conformist tradition trying initially, and although he dismissed it as "emotionalism", Mr Beggs could also confess that,

> ... going through the door (of a Presbyterian church) for the first time, the skeletons of the ancestors who were burnt and pillaged by the Protestants sort of rose up in front of me.

On the Protestant side, while there seemed to be rather less initial reluctance about attending mass, there was a feeling occasionally that Catholic congregations were sometimes lacking in reverence.

The response made by the couples here, though, is illuminating. Firstly, difficulties and criticisms were directly aired in discussion. Criticism, moreover, was normally well taken, it seems, and valued as a means of seeing one's own religious tradition from a fresh perspective. One husband, for instance, remarked that joint church attendance "makes you more aware, less accepting", while another suggested that one outcome of his future wife's accompanying him to Catholic services was that,

> you begin to see the loopholes in your own church through them (the other partner); they mirror it to you and it shows up all the flaws. She was very unimpressed with our form of service.

Secondly, in re-evaluating their own liturgical tradition the partners here were also provided with an opportunity to discern fresh positive elements within the other's religious confession. Thus, for example, Mr Boyle became drawn by the "reflective and thought-provoking" elements in Protestant worship, while in his wife's eyes the Catholic and Protestant liturgical traditions became essentially "complementary", the sacrificial emphasis in one being balanced by the scriptural orientation of the other. In consequence, earlier emotional and institutional constraints on joint ritual activity seem to have become effectively neutralized.

Thirdly, the couples went on to experiment with various forms of joint church attendance, either by attending in their respective parish churches on alternate Sundays, or by 'shopping around' for a service which reflected their particular orientation.

A difficulty which arose for these couples as they attempted to develop an appropriate ritual expression for their relationship was that they necessarily confronted official definitions concerning the appropriate limits placed by the Christian Churches on joint liturgical

participation. Though these could be expressed in an informal way in the attitudes of individual ministers and priests, definitions of this kind were most explicitly contained within Catholic canonical regulations governing the range of ritual activities open to members and non-members of the Roman Catholic Church. For example, couples experienced as a deprivation their inability to take communion together at a Eucharist celebrated under the auspices of one of their denominations. Some Protestant ministers were reticent about giving communion to a practising Roman Catholic while the Catholic Church itself expressly forbids the practice. For these couples intercommunion (the word in the widest sense almost literally conveys the unity which these couples felt to be so important) represented the natural culmination of their attempt to give to their relationship a common devotional and ritual focus. More specifically, however, it also symbolized the partners' equal status as Christians in the eyes of God. Its denial to one partner and not the other therefore stigmatized the individual not permitted to communicate as being less than fully Christian. One can see this, for instance, in the comments of Mr Boyle:

> One of the things the Churches should be doing is helping people to grow and develop in unity. Now one way of doing this is through both partners participating in the Eucharist. This is the corner-stone of Christianity - the greatest and most important single act of worship that we have - and naturally you want to be able to receive communion with the person who is closest and most dear to you; but with the present set-up, the present mentality, that's not on. Your partner can be turned away from the altar rails, you know, not treated as a fellow-Christian - just as something else that's not on a par with what we are.

Although the issue of intercommunion became in this situation a further focal point for discussion and study, couples in general did not explicitly flout the official rulings on the matter. It was from time to time possible for them to participate together at the informal

Eucharistic celebrations which were occasionally held in the ecumenical circles in which they moved, but they were reticent about a public challenge to the rules concerning intercommunion in more formal settings. However, as with the couples in the previous group, those here were able to minimize the implication of stigma by defining the character of their courtship interaction in a way which contrasted it with their perception of the external social environment.

The basis of this contrast was the couples' claim that their ability to engage each other in dialogue, their receptivity to each other's ideas and the existing extent of their joint ritual and devotional activity were evidence of a 'spiritual unity' within the relationship. That is, the structures and understandings which had developed between them at the informal and face-to-face level signified the existence of a de facto Christian unity. They were thus prefiguring future and necessary developments at the institutional level by establishing in an organic way a microcosmic representation of the wider unity to which all Christians should aspire. Furthermore, in doing so, they were providing a foundation without which wider structural unity would remain impossible.

Alongside this image of their own unity couples could place a characterization of the official approach to the removal of barriers separating the various Christian denominations. This saw the attempts of Church functionaries operating in bureaucratic settings to establish the 'correct' theological and organizational bases from which patterns of institutional unity might be developed as serving to perpetuate disunity. Those who operated in such a mode, the couples felt, were often too timid, impotent or reactionary to take action which would effectively break down denominational barriers.

As a result, from the couples' standpoint, two things emerged. The first of these was the creation of anomaly and injustice working to the disadvantage of precisely those people who were striving as individuals to promote unity. This was something which Mr Beggs, for example, commented on at some length in relation to the Catholic rules on intercommunion:

> What I do object to is that the Church puts Pamela in the position of being less than Christian because they refuse to allow her to take the sacrament of communion and until this changes I think ecumenical marriages will be very difficult. Between people who really care about Christianity they will be very difficult, because if you don't give a tinker's curse then it's alright, you know, or if you're like a lot of people I knew at home where the Protestant party became a Catholic for a day, signed a wee form saying they were Catholic, had communion and never darkened the door of a church again, that was quite acceptable to the Catholic Church. But to have someone saying "I am a Christian. I see no reason to abandon my Presbyterianism, but yet I've got a belief in the Eucharist and want to receive it with my partner" then this was totally unacceptable. No matter what the person believes, it's unacceptable by virtue of them being outside the Church. We still have a very elitist view of Christianity. The Catholics are the pinnacle and there are various stages on the road down. That must go. I think the basic premise underlying any form of expression of ecumenism must be reciprocity. You can't ask someone to do something that you're not prepared to do yourself.

Secondly, the perpetuation of continued disunity was further served in these couples' eyes because with only a bureaucratic commitment to dialogue, receptivity and the equal spiritual status of all Christians, the institutional religious bodies had no basis from which to counter the deleterious consequences of Christian disunity in the wider society. This was seen notably to be the case the couples felt in Northern Ireland, where the conflict between Catholics and Protestants was from their point of view a very obvious sign of Christian disunity.

Although like those couples previously described the present

couples had in some respects a rather negative view of Northern Irish society, they were rather less inclined to see a basis for the conflict in an irrational and obsessional preoccupation with religion and religious divisions. Instead they characterized Northern Ireland as a society in which valid religious traditions had been perverted for sectarian ends. Northern Ireland from this point of view became a 'tribal' society in which people had lost sight of the basic and common Christian heritage which united them and had reverted to an atavistic reliance on divisive symbols and postures.

In this situation the official religious bodies in Northern Ireland had failed, so these couples thought, to make the necessary response to the situation or to give the kind of lead to ameliorate the situation which might have been expected of them. As one of these informants put it,

> We became more and more aware of the political irrelevance of the Churches. You know they had nothing to say to a community in chaos, either ignored the political situation, pretended it didn't exist with all the injustices and horrors that are going on, or they became partisan and totally one-sided.

It was left instead to committed individuals like themselves to become involved in, as the Beggs put it, "the sort of therapeutic role you could have in the community" or to give expression to a conviction, like that of the McQuillans, that "you could do something to bring both sectors of the community together" by becoming involved in community service of various kinds in areas which had seen violence. (This was something undertaken by the couples often at some cost to the time they spent together. Ironically in a sense, the logic of communal violence in the city meant that community work could usually only be carried out with members of the 'same side'. As a result couples found that in

times of civil disorder they could be separated for more or less lengthy periods.)

To summarize, it is not difficult to see how the processes at work in these relationships could lead to a relatively stable pattern of adjustment in courtship. These partners seem, as Berger and Kellner (1964, 10) put it, to have "internalized a degree of readiness to redefine themselves and to modify their stock of experience". In other words their desire not to proceed from a rigid position very likely provides the precondition for a subsequent modification of viewpoint. In saying this one is not implying that with these couples the way would be left open for the development of an uncritical religious syncretism. Given their level of religious involvement and the degree of theological sophistication which the couples display, this is far from being likely. Rather it seems possible that the ability to 'work things out' and to 'find something positive' in their relationships fosters the continuance of the relationship rather than its dissolution by ensuring that dissonant elements in what the couples bring to the relationships are met 'head on' but not in a combative fashion. Beyond this couples are provided with a major source of symbolic reinforcement for their status as 'ecumenicals'. Despite the inability of religious institutions to go beyond their bureaucratic and organizational interests, the shared ritual and devotional activity of these couples provides proof that Catholics and Protestants can come together in a meaningful and equal relationship free from the dissension characteristic of the world outside the relationship. Rather unexpectedly, then, intermarried couples in Northern Ireland can be found whose beliefs, attitudes, values and practices propel them towards marriage rather than away from it.

One other couple, the Lavertys, have been placed in this group although they differ somewhat from those just described. Both Mr and Mrs Laverty have had a comfortable middle-class upbringing and, like their respective fathers, they were both, when interviewed, engaged in active professional life. They had met at university where they were both taking the same courses, and soon found that their intellectual interests, their tastes and their career plans were similar. Their courtship was a prolonged one because of their joint commitment to their chosen profession, and it was only when they had both become qualified that they felt free to enter marriage.

The Lavertys - at least at the time when the interview took place - displayed neither the devotional activity nor the ecumenical orientation of the couples mentioned above. Mrs Laverty rarely went to church although she did regard herself as "a fairly religious person", adding that,

> I have difficulty describing myself as a Presbyterian because I don't go to church, but I'm equally unhappy describing myself as a heathen.

Her husband, by contrast, had been a fairly regular churchgoer since his student days but this had since come to a quite decisive end. During the interview Mr Laverty confessed that he had become disillusioned with what he saw as the ineffectualness of the Roman Catholic Church in Ireland in the face of the situation in Northern Ireland. As recently as two months previously he had "given up my religion", affirming that this was not simply a matter of lapsing, but that as the result of a conscious decision he "no longer practised or believed".

In the past apparently they had had some contact with various ecumenical ventures centring on the university but the importance of

such activity for them had faded over time. It did seem, though, that what essentially they brought to their relationship was a deep intellectual interest in philosophy, religion and politics, which had been with them from the beginning and which had survived Mr Laverty's renouncement of his Catholicism. Thus,

> We talk about religion all the time. We're both very interested in it. This is an aspect of a more general interest in theology and philosophy which we shared right through university.

The Lavertys, then, like the other couples here, had a degree of communication that was informed and mutually satisfying. Like the others, too, they seemed to have a somewhat self-conscious awareness of the similarities and differences between them. However, in the Lavertys' case this had tended to remain at a rather theoretical level. The assertion of an a priori unity between husband and wife on the basis of their common Christianity is missing or at least undervalued in their case, as, too, is the sort of appeal made by the other couples to prayer and common worship as a signal of that unity. It may be though that the Lavertys' increasing involvement in their professional routines as the courtship progressed, and later, is in some senses analogous to the development of shared ritual activities by the more ecumenically minded couples. Indeed, to a certain extent, such activity might be all the more effective in propelling the courtship forward insofar as the difficulty of finding a mutually acceptable ritual expression is effectively removed (cf. Rapoport and Rapoport, 1965).

Group III Included in this group are six couples - the Parks, the Farrells, the Dalys, the Devlins, the Cunninghams and the Pearsons - nearly all of whom show some evidence of having avoided for as long as possible the direct discussion of possibly contentious issues during the courtship.[1]

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[1] Both the Farrells and the Devlins were still engaged at the time of the interview. The Pearsons were on the point of marriage. (For ease of presentation the female partner in all these cases is referred to as 'Mrs'.)

Again with the exception of the Dalys, evidence of avoidance was forthcoming from all of the couples here. Mrs Park pointed out, for instance, that she and her future husband rarely talked about politics.

> I think we do avoid certain things. There are certain things we don't talk about, you know, especially politics, political things, like a United Ireland - that sort of thing.[1]

In a similar fashion her husband, asked about how they resolved the rather negative views he had expressed about the Catholic Church during the interview, said,

> We don't resolve them because we don't argue about them, you know. Kathy has got her church, you know, and I accept fully that she does and I would never try to talk her out of it. In many cases we would just probably have talked about it in a light-hearted fashion, because it's not worth while arguing about religion. Men have argued about religion since time immemorial and so we're not going to solve anything, you know, by getting into full-scale rows.

The Farrells were also aware of the role avoidance played in their relationship. As Mr Farrell put it,

> I mean we've never argued about religion. We've always ended up avoiding it. Like we've talked to each other about trying to get a house and things like that but we've never discussed the religion issue with one another. We just couldn't face up to it.

While Mr Cunningham was able to note that he had felt a need "to iron everything out", as the relationship proceeded he had been able to find excuses not to do so because "she gets a bit upset and so on".

Although the evidence is far from conclusive it seems possible to suggest that the pattern of avoidance found in these relationships had its roots in the prior 'friendship' context. Certainly if the example of Mrs Farrell, who pointed out that she and her Protestant friends would sometimes discuss Catholics and Catholicism but never when

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[1] The Parks were interviewed only two weeks after their wedding. The present tense can therefore be supposed reasonably to refer also to the pre-marriage period.

any of her Catholic friends were actually present, is anything to go by, avoidance was a feature of at least some of the groups in which these couples had met. It may be that, with a good deal of their initial courtship interaction taking place in a group context, avoidance was a pattern which it was difficult for partners to interrupt even after they had begun to move towards an increasingly dyadic form of interaction.

Eventually, of course, avoidance was suspended, though only it seems once an initial decision to marry had been made. The transition to openness does not appear necessarily to have been an abrupt one. From the comments of Mr Cunningham quoted earlier, and the experience of the Devlins who were interviewed during courtship, it seems that some couples at least passed through a period in their relationship when issues would 'come up' with some frequency only to be shelved again. Mr Devlin explained, for instance, that in relation to the question of the kind of marriage ceremony the couples should have:

> We'd be talking about things and somehow this would come up, you know, and she would just go blank, so I knew what she was thinking of. I mean we keep saying we'll have to talk it all out but then we just leave it.

If this was a common pattern it was not apparently one that persisted, for in those relationships in which marriage had been reached there is evidence of overt conflict at the point in the relationship where couples decided to be married. The range of issues over which conflict occurred, however, was limited to those having to do with the form of the wedding ceremony, family planning and the religious upbringing of children: all issues in which the Catholic partner was subject to a variety of prescriptions and proscriptions laid down by the Catholic Church.

Both Mrs Pearson and Mrs Cunningham, for example, wanted to be married in a Catholic ceremony because neither felt that they would be "properly married" with a service in a registry office. The male partners in both these cases objected to the requirement that they be married in this way. As Mr Pearson put it,

> It was at this stage that I discovered the injustice around the ceremony, you know - we had to be married in a Catholic church. I found that hard to accept, that there was no middle way, that there was no compromise.

In a similar fashion Mrs Cunningham reported of her husband that,

> he couldn't understand why it was important to get married in a Catholic church. The important thing was that I should get married to him, and we had quite a few arguments about it.

This was something Mr Cunningham himself elaborated with regard to the ceremony but also to other matters which he felt to be governed by the "dogmatic" character of the Roman Catholic Church.

> There was certainly that (the question of the ceremony) and then there were these sort of dogmatic Catholic teachings that seemed to me quite unreasonable and completely absurd. You know, that the children of the marriage have to be Catholic. There's no reason why they should have to be Catholic or anything else for that matter. (Q. Is your objection to their being brought up as Catholics or to the fact that you're required to say that they should be brought up in that way?) I sort of object to them being sort of earmarked as Catholics, even before there was any question of them arriving and that I had no say in the matter, just that they had to be. It's dogmatic.

Similarly with the Dalys. Although avoidance was not a feature of their courtship, which had begun in London and which was relatively short, they had quarrelled soon after the decision to marry had been made. "The arguments", said Mrs Daly, "were about things like whether the children should be brought up as Catholics, where we should be married" and, apparently, over acceptable methods of contraception. According to Mrs Daly, "at this stage Tom didn't agree with it" (contraception).

This was an attitude which, she confessed, caused her a good deal of irritation, especially as she was adamant that "I wasn't prepared to have twelve kids, one every year". Again, however, most of her objections seemed to centre on what she perceived to be Catholic 'inflexibility'.

> I don't have any sort of prejudice against Catholics but I do think Catholics are very sort of unbending, Tom included. They think they are the one, the only true church; everybody else pales in comparison and we must bend to their will. Their rules are completely inflexible - this is what irritated me more than anything else. The fact that they were, well not arrogant, but "We can't change; everybody else must change". They didn't sort of meet you half way even. This was what I resented, I think; this is what we had the arguments about.

The resolution of the sorts of arguments couples were having at this point seems as a very general rule to have involved compromise on the ceremony by the Protestant partner, on the family-planning issue by the Catholic partner,[1] while the question of the children was left substantially undecided.[2] The point to be stressed however is that while conflicts over the issues themselves do seem to have been resolved, it would be mistaken to take this as an indication of a basic shift taking place at this time in the attitudes of the partners, especially those who were Protestant.

It was noticeable, for instance, with the Dalys and with the Parks that the Protestant partners could use the decisions made to 'exempt' the Catholic partner from the various strictures previously placed on Catholics in general or on the Catholic Church.

Although he thought that many Catholic doctrines were "totally illogical" Mr Park, unlike Mrs Daly, was relatively unworried about marrying in a Catholic Church or about the upbringing of children as

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[1] Mr Daly, for instance, eventually accepted his wife's view after her unhappy experience with a Catholic family-planning agency.

[2] As one wife put it, "we decided to leave the children in 'pending' until they came along".

Catholics. Indeed, he thought for a time that the Roman Catholic regulations on mixed marriages actually required him to convert to Catholicism, and this he was prepared to do, at least nominally. However, he did share with Mrs Daly a dislike of the official Catholic line on contraception. Mr Park's views on the matter had been strengthened, it seems, by a period spent in the Irish Republic as a student. As he put it,

> I object to the Church laying down the law on this. I've seen the hardship it (the unavailability of contraception) causes in Dublin. I've seen the hardship it causes in many areas where mothers continue to have children without being able to, you know, plan their families. I object to this very strongly.

Mrs Park herself took the view that the use of contraception was "up to your own conscience", and so there was relatively little opportunity for conflict between them to develop on the issue. This in turn, however, provided an opportunity for Mr Park to characterize her as "not one of these bigoted Catholics" and to contrast her "liberal" views with the "total authoritarian nature" of the Catholic Church:

> I object to the authoritarian, the total authoritarian nature of it (Roman Catholicism). Kathy is liberal. Her parents are liberal. In fact she's on the pill, you know, and her parents haven't made any objections to her going on the pill and it's for no medical reason other than the fact that she doesn't want to have any family as yet.

As noted earlier Mrs Daly, for example, had characterized Catholics as being "very sort of unbending, Tom included", but she could also point out when talking about contraception that,

> I think that would be a problem if Tom was one of the really sort of rigid Catholics, but he is quite fair, he'll give the point.

Later on, too, speaking more generally, she could also concede that,

> I think in all this Tom has a mind of his own, whereas a lot of Catholics (and especially Irish Catholics) they're brought up so rigidly in the Church they're afraid to go against what the priest says.

This sort of approach was also useful it seems as a means of dealing with negative definitions of the relationship which others attempted to impose. Mrs Daly replied to her father's objections to the marriage in a way consistent with her comments exempting her husband from the judgments she would apply to other Catholics: "I said Tom was the person I wanted to marry and it was just a shame that he was a Catholic, but that was it".

A contrary pattern is found in only one case - that of the Pearsons. The period immediately following the decision to marry was a little unusual for them in that Mrs Pearson, in her own words,

> ... became a religious maniac for about three weeks and I tried to convince him that Catholicism was the true religion and that he should become a Catholic.

In fact this attempt at proselytism foundered soon after apparently in the face of Mr Pearson's disinterest. Interestingly, though, it was soon replaced by an attempt to induce something close to what Davis (1961) in a study of 'deviance disavowal' by the visibly handicapped has called 'normalization' - the attempt by a person possessing a potentially discrediting attribute to minimize its stigmatizing implications.

> After a while I began to feel that he had an awful lot of bad stereotypes about Catholics and I just had to get over them.

This attempt at normalization seems to have been only partially successful. Mr Pearson saw it simply as a period when "these sort of things came up and we just had to get over them". Having 'got over' them, what is interesting is that avoidance was it seems reintroduced, for

Mr Pearson revealed that "We haven't discussed it much since", while Mrs Pearson added that, "We now try to keep out of it".

In other cases the interview material similarly suggests that avoidance was reinstated once the necessary decisions had been made. So, one can find the Cunninghams replying, when asked whether they had "resolved those issues at that time?", "No, I don't think so" in Mrs Cunningham's case, and Mr Cunningham saying, "No, not really I suppose".

In summary, then, a pattern is apparent in these relationships whereby couples meet and pursue the establishment of their relationship initially within a group context in which the avoidance of contentious issues is a feature. They themselves similarly avoid such issues until a decision to marry has been made. Avoidance at this point breaks down though only to allow the discussion of a set of specific issues relating to Catholic regulations on marriage and married life. Couples manage to resolve the conflict produced by these discussions by means of a mutual compromise over the site of the marriage ceremony and the issue of family planning and by leaving the question of children undecided. Protestant partners in particular used the fact of this compromise to 'exempt' the Catholic partner from stigmatizing and stereotypical definitions they were prepared to apply to Roman Catholics in a general sense. Having made a decision to marry and having resolved the issues which it raised couples seemed to reinstate patterns of avoidance in the relationship.

Group IV The fourth group, again, is a small one, comprising the Fergusons, the Clarks, the Tynans and the Quinns. In each case what is found is a young couple attracted to each other almost instantly, only then to experience a good deal of conflict before having this

conflict displaced, as it were, by events or influences external to the dyad.[1]

We begin by looking at the Fergusons. Robert and Angela Ferguson met while they were both still at school. As Mrs Ferguson revealed, they discussed marriage at a very, very early stage of their courtship:

> This would absolutely choke you if you knew - the second night we went out together we talked about marriage. I mean it's incredible, it's just one of those things, it's just love at first sight. I suppose that's what it was, in a way. It's hard to believe. I usually don't believe in rubbish like that.

Soon after this, however, Mrs Ferguson attempted to bring her husband to the Catholic faith. In her own words, she "really loved the Catholic religion. I mean I really and truly loved it, it meant everything to me". And she goes on,

> You know, I saw myself in a very martyred light. Even when I was a very young child. I remember there was a statue of the Virgin Mary in our chapel and it was just brand new, and it was just put up, and I used to have glorious daydreams about the church being set on fire by Protestant arsonists, and me racing in and saving that statue and racing out again. And then, of course, when I was a girl I did fancy being a nun. I've quite a few relations nuns (laughs) and some of their fervour must have communicated itself to me ...

Before very long, though, this 'fervour' led to rows between her and her husband-to-be. The rows, said Mrs Ferguson,

> consisted of me endeavouring to show Robert where the Protestant faith had gone wrong. (laughs) Head bursting with all the apologetics and Catholic doctrine that had been pumped into me every day at school. I couldn't wait to get home and try it out on him.

Furthermore,

> I told Robert many and many a time that if it came to the bit between the Church and him, I would give him up any day, it would not cost me a thought. I told him that if he would not marry me in a Catholic church, then that was it - finished.

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[1] The precise nature of the 'external' events or influences varies from couple to couple; so in discussion they are treated separately.

Now, it happened that Mr Ferguson, although professing himself to be highly critical of organized religion, had had a fairly 'strict' upbringing. He had attended Sunday School and Bible classes, and had been a member of the Boys' Brigade for some years before losing interest. Accordingly, he was able to use this early religious socialization in order to counter his wife's Catholic arguments with biblical ones.[1] At the same time, the Fergusons did seem to have reached some reciprocal understanding of each other's position. Mr Ferguson could acknowledge during the interview that at the time of their disagreements,

> I knew absolutely nothing about the Catholic religion. I knew no facts whatsoever about it. The only facts I knew were probably what I would hear - the usual sorts of things that you hear in Protestant circles - idol worshippers, they worship the Virgin Mary - that sort of thing.

Furthermore, Mrs Ferguson could look back and characterize herself as having been "bigoted". How had this change come about?

Mr Ferguson was able to recount in some detail how his views had developed:

> When I came to university I met a few Republicans, found they were interesting guys, got to know them and picked up completely new knowledge which I'd never had before. I read a few Republican papers, the Protestant Telegraph, compared them and ended up with a political viewpoint. Changes in me were beginning to happen and we got a bit closer. Angela had lost the edge of her Catholicism and I'd learnt more about it so the arguments weren't so heated. We discussed things without arguing.

At the same time,

> I think it was this great awakening in me, this coming to university, that got me interested in drugs, and when that started happening a great change took place. I first just started smoking; it led to taking acid, and it led to taking a lot of it. During the time I was taking acid, I could practically say I had a complete time change. For a time I was practically living as a schizoid, you know, thinking on the one hand of Angela and our life together, and thinking on the other hand of

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[1] Interestingly, in the interview situation, the Fergusons differed over the relative importance of these particular disagreements as compared with others they might have had. Mrs Ferguson suggested that they were much more vehement: Mr Ferguson disagreed. (He further suggested

> something different which I got from acid - a much more spiritual state of living. Because it had been wakened in me by acid, I kept on taking acid and I found that the side of life with Angela, though I still loved her, was getting crowded out with what was going on in my head ...

As it happens, some of the major consequences of Mr Ferguson's involvement in the drug sub-culture are not completely clear. Certainly, there was a crisis in the relationship and certainly it was drug-related, but the Fergusons declined to discuss the matter in any detail "because it's just too painful". However, what does seem clear is that Mrs Ferguson lost still further the 'edge' of her Catholicism. In part, this seems simply to have had something to do with the 'liberal' climate of the university and with her recourse to contraception. More importantly, though, this 'falling away' apparently became reinforced by her own progressive use of cannabis. As she explained,

> All my beliefs began to fade away. I started to make up my own brand of religion in my head. Everything had been so clear-cut before, but gradually everything became modified. I began to view Christ in other than a divine light. So it became not only meaningless to receive Holy Communion, it became a mockery. It became pointless, so I stopped receiving the sacraments. I stopped attending mass. Neither of us did. (Robert had previously started coming to mass with me.) Soon it was as if I had never been a Catholic at all. Anyway, I started to smoke and I began to discover that I liked this feeling. It heightened my appreciation of music and literature to a remarkable degree. So since then I've been smoking pretty regularly and over that space of time we've become very close and our religious viewpoint - if you can call it that - is now absolutely identical.

With the Clarks and the Tynans there were no express attempts at conversion. Both couples however share the circumstance of intruding external events with the Fergusons. As in the Fergusons' case, too, the partners here were in their late teens at the time of meeting and were either still at school or had just left it.

The Tynans met in a dance hall in Belfast in the latter part of 1969. Mrs Tynan recalls that initially she had had an ulterior motive for not engaging in any sort of 'cooling out' manoeuvre upon surmising Mr Tynan's religious background, explaining that,

> I had gone to the dance with a group of girls, and we sort of had a set of signals. If you danced with your left hand in the air, it meant that the bloke had a car and you were alright for a lift home ...

More importantly, though, they both felt an immediate sense of ease and comfort, and a certain feeling of well-being in each other's company. Mrs Tynan continued,

> From the first night we felt that we had known each other for months. It just happened naturally. We didn't ever have to struggle to talk.

Nevertheless, it soon became clear that there was not a complete identity of viewpoint between them. Mr Tynan, for instance, claimed to have been "frequently outspoken about the Catholic Church and its role in the present crisis", and he held strongly, too, to the necessity for maintaining the union with Britain.[1]

To a certain extent Mr Tynan's 'outspokenness' was acceptable to Mrs Tynan because she herself eschewed any identification with Republicanism, even to the extent of quarrelling with her brother over his support for certain sections of the Republican movement. She was less in sympathy, initially at any rate, with remarks made about Catholicism per se, but always felt able to assure herself that "he treat(s) me like a person rather than a Catholic". The same, however, could not be said to be true of her work relations:

> I was working in this firm which was mostly Catholic girls but about the beginning of 1970 I moved to this other job. In this firm there was a staff of thirty-six and only two Catholics, me and this other girl. The place where I worked was in the city centre and every time a bomb went off they looked at me. As far as they were concerned all Catholics equalled the I.R.A. There was nothing but hatred and bigotry and I just wanted to get away from it.

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[1] For example, he remarked on how he had been affronted by a display at Mrs Tynan's school of the then recently introduced decimal coinage containing only Republic of Ireland coins.

In the event, Mrs Tynan went to live in Manchester for a year without, however, breaking off the courtship. While there she experimented with attendance at a Pentecostalist Church "which I enjoyed very much because it was so friendly and lively, not like the Catholic Church over here which always seems to be so cold". Eventually, though, homesickness forced her back to Northern Ireland but without a smooth renewal of her courtship with Mr Tynan who, by now, was working as a semi-professional musician. Says Mr Tynan,

> I was working with this group and Sheila started travelling round with us. All the boys in the group were Protestants and they started to get annoyed about this, that she was a Catholic and she was from _____. Well, she took it seriously and we started arguing. Well, one thing led to another and we split up. Part of it was a clash of personality between her and the manager of the band. She wanted to have it out there and then, but I was trying to patch it up with everybody. Anyway, like I say, we split up and I didn't know what to do. I took about four weeks to make up my mind, and then I just left the band and went back to her.

Over time and partly, it seems, because of her experience with the Pentecostalist group in Manchester, Mrs Tynan has moved much closer to her husband's position in that a certain disenchantment with Catholicism seems to have set in. At the same time, though, Mr Tynan seems to be able to echo Mr Ferguson's remark about "knowing more about the Catholic Church", even if this has tended to have its more comic side, as when during an electricity strike Mr Tynan was asked to "drive up to the chapel and get some holy candles", the existence and function of which had to be painstakingly explained to him.

In broad outline, the Clarks seem to have had a rather similar pattern of experiences. As mentioned earlier, they had met as they travelled to school each day and soon had a "strong" relationship. It happens though that Mr Clark's father was an official in his

local Orange lodge and so the liaison was kept secret initially with the connivance of some of Mr Clark's friends. Eventually, through the intervention of the "local busybody", Mr Clark's father did find out what was going on and "hit the roof". Furthermore, Mr Clark Snr. attempted to make his prohibition effective by threatening to change his will so that the family business would never pass into his son's hands.

Mr Clark gave his father an assurance that the courtship would cease, and the impression of its demise was further strengthened when Mrs Clark left Northern Ireland to go to university in Scotland. Mr Clark likewise left school and was taken into the family business. The relationship, however, continued in secret for something like six years until the pair had savings and qualifications enough to enable them to emigrate to and marry in Britain. The circumstances meant, naturally enough, that the two would be separated for long periods, especially during term time. They could not, of course, contact each other openly, but were fortunate in being able to use a third party as a 'post-box' for letters. During vacation time, an ostentatious display of avoidance was accompanied by clandestine meetings on the other side of the city, while occasionally they were able to meet in the rather freer atmosphere of holidays away from home.[1]

As with the Fergusons, there was a quite explicit recognition in this case of a change in the partner's perspective over time - a change, part of which at least can be attributed to the circumstances under which the courtship was forced to proceed. Here just as in the previous cases we have mentioned in this group, the Protestant partner in the relationship had held an unflattering view of the Catholic Church.

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[1] Apparently, although nothing was said to them directly, Mrs Clark's parents seem to have known what was going on.

As Mr Clark observed,

> I was pretty sure at that time, and I still think to a certain extent, that the Catholic Church is authoritarian and dogmatic. I was pretty sure as well that the civil rights movement that was going on at that time was a front for the I.R.A. ...

Nevertheless, he began to modify his views partly as a reaction to his father's increased militancy as the situation in Northern Ireland developed, and partly because Mrs Clark had begun to shift her ground somewhat. She was certainly able to contend that,

> We got to the stage where we were more prepared to compromise. Our views have sort of mellowed. We got to be more open and more ready to give and take. Jim's much more his own man now and he's got a bit more liberal. He was prepared to consider getting married in a Catholic church, which he wasn't prepared to do before.

Mrs Clark quite explicitly located the change in her own way of thinking in the experiences she had had outside Northern Ireland, especially because, she thought, they had undermined the rigid code of sexual morality she came to associate with Irish Catholicism. As she puts it,

> I got to know more people, different ways of doing things after I went there (to university). When I first went there, to give you an example, I was horrified by people living together, but after a while I thought, "It seems to work out alright for them, so why should I try to stop them".

The final couple here are the Quinns, although to some extent they might just as readily have been placed in Group I. The Quinns had met in a pub in the latter part of 1972. Before they met, Mrs Quinn had been involved in a "not very serious relationship" with one of Mr Quinn's friends. However,

> We just got on so well together right from the very first meeting. We just laughed and joked with one another, you would have thought we'd known each other all our lives. This friend of mine just sort of faded into the background. I felt kind of sorry for him, but he's a good friend and he realized we were attracted to one another and it hadn't been very serious between us, so he just bowed to the inevitable without any jealousy or anything.

Mr Quinn was at the time of their meeting "a practising Catholic". He felt himself to be "reasonably well informed" and although he was not actively involved in the ecumenical movement he did have an interest in it, even if he could say, "I didn't think there was much chance of ecumenical change in Ireland." Mrs Quinn had no precise denominational affiliation. She had, as she put it, "given up on churches" but, like Mrs Laverty, say, she did feel she was "quite a religious person", and occasionally she attended meetings of the Society of Friends.

About four months after they met the Quinns began to realize that "we had a serious relationship, and we began to talk of the consequences of having a mixed marriage in Northern Ireland". Mrs Quinn's uneasiness about these "consequences", which she enumerated as "where we should live, what we should do about the upbringing of the children, all the old Protestant myths I had about Catholics", together with a good deal of adverse reaction from her step-mother, led her to try to end the relationship. Mr Quinn managed to stave off this attempt by temporizing and by trying to minimize the possible difficulties, and, even though Mrs Quinn felt that "he was just saying things to make it easier", she allowed herself to be convinced and the relationship continued.

Mr Quinn was aware that the Roman Catholic regulations on 'mixed' marriages had changed and, although he was not sure of the exact details of the changes, he was fairly sure that these included provisions for a 'joint' ceremony. Accordingly, Mr and Mrs Quinn made plans for a Catholic wedding ceremony with some sort of Quaker involvement. Unfortunately, from their point of view, just after all the secular arrangements for the wedding had been made, they were told that it was extremely unlikely that the bishop in the diocese in which they

were living would permit such a ceremony. Mrs Quinn's reaction was, "I began to think all these myths were true", while according to Mr Quinn,

> I lost a lot of respect for the higher echelons of the Church. I suppose in a way I did know that it wouldn't be on, but I couldn't see why they couldn't be more open.

As a solution to the problem of what they should do following this debacle, the Quinns considered living together, but decided that this was hardly feasible in view of the possible parental reaction it might engender. It was about this time that Mr Quinn began to discover what he called "the fear in my own mind of the Catholic Church", by which he seems to have meant a fear of the Church's capacity to exercise power over its members. As a result,

> I began to inform myself about things. I began to study. I had to make up my own mind, "Does conscience decide?"

By this time the Quinns were being encouraged by another couple, of a decidedly ecumenical bent, to continue with their plans for a joint service. They received some help too from a leading Irish theologian, and eventually were able to be married in the manner in which they wished by travelling to the United States. Unlike the 'ecumenical couples' seen earlier, the Quinns have not developed in the direction of prayer and common worship. Like the previous couples in this group they have developed a certain commonality, in this case formed around some of the issues the ecumenicals have raised, and expressed in terms of a determination to seek a change in the Irish Roman Catholic Hierarchy's interpretation of the 'mixed' marriage regulations.

In summary, then, in this group one finds a fairly clear progression: early attraction is replaced by conflict as the Catholic

partners became aware of the stigmatizing labels attached by the Protestant partner to Catholics and Catholicism.[1] This then gives way to a shared viewpoint in which the impact of stigmatization is lessened through the operation of extraneous factors. One should note, too, the important methodological point here. It seems that those who have developed processual analyses of courtship have tended to neglect, except where delineating the validating functions of significant others, the possibility that changes within a dyad may be produced by factors external to it.

Group V In some respects it is slightly misleading to speak of a fifth group since there is only one couple within it - the Jamiesons. They have been treated separately because they differ in an important regard from other couples. No attempt was made in the sampling procedure to include couples where one of the partners had converted to the religious denomination of the other. In a few cases, as will be seen, quite short-lived attempts at conversion did take place. Only in the Jamiesons' case does the attempt at proselytism seem to have been rather more prolonged.

The Jamiesons met in the autumn of 1969. Mr Jamieson, an Anglican and a professional man, came originally from a small country town in the western portion of Northern Ireland. He had gained a scholarship to a direct-grant school some miles from his home and had boarded there before going on to university in Belfast.[2] In his late teens he had displeased his parents by forming a relationship with a

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[1] It may well be that many interfaith relationships are formed in Northern Ireland on the basis of an early and deep-seated commitment, only to falter in the face of irreconcilable differences.

[2] Although Mr Jamieson's father and uncles were Orangemen, he refused to join the Order when asked to do so because, as he put it, "I thought I was a lot more broadminded than the rest of my family, who hadn't the standard of education I had".

Roman Catholic girl from his home town. This particular relationship continued after they had both moved to Belfast to go to university but "finished eventually because she wanted me to become a Roman Catholic and I wouldn't".[1] In fact, not only was Mr Jamieson not prepared to become a Roman Catholic but, he said, it had "been ground into me as a boy" that the Catholic Church's rules relating to 'mixed' marriages were unjust and as a result, as will be seen, he was not prepared to contemplate under any circumstances a marriage ceremony in a Roman Catholic church.

Mrs Jamieson had had a middle-class background. Her father was an academic and her grandfather, on her mother's side, had been a fairly prosperous businessman who had, however, lost a good deal of property during the 'troubles' of the 1920s. This latter circumstance did not endear the Protestant community to Mrs Jamieson's mother who, in addition, had developed over the years an interest in Irish history and culture.[2] As a result the household had had a rather nationalistic flavour, though Mrs Jamieson herself professed no interest in politics. She did feel, however, that she had been 'spoilt' as a child, mainly she thought by her father.

Her first encounter with Mr Jamieson and her realization (from his name) that he was a Protestant had left her feeling rather uneasy. However,

> ... there wasn't anybody else (at the dance) that I was even attracted to. I chatted to him and it went on quite well. We had both been invited to a party afterwards, and we decided to go, but I kept thinking it was such a shame he was a Protestant. But because I wasn't going out with anyone, I then went out with him again, and I began to think, "Why should I not?" ... I was always used as a child, if I wanted something and I liked it, I sort of had to have it, and I really do think that I didn't really say to myself, you know, "There are some things you can't have".

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[1] Interestingly, Mr Jamieson related that his father had joined forces with the local Catholic priest in an attempt to discourage the liaison. The attempt had failed, though, because of the couple's move to Belfast.

[2] This is of some consequence when we consider the reaction of Mrs Jamieson's mother to the proposed marriage in a later chapter.

At about the same time as Mrs Jamieson was coming to think in these terms, Mr Jamieson decided to make his position known with regard to a marriage ceremony in a Catholic church.

> On the third evening of being out with her I told her I would like to make it clear that if we ever became involved that I would have nothing to do with the Catholic Church, so giving her an opportunity now that if she wanted to give it up and forget me then here was her chance, because I felt there was something different about this relationship, and I wanted it to be quite clear that this was the way it would have to be. She accepted that at the time, saying to me that religion wasn't important, although I didn't think she realized the implications of what it meant. I did, of course, because I'd been through it before when I was eighteen or so. Anyway, I had told her within a week of going out with her that I would not accept anything to do with the Catholic Church and she accepted this.

It is possible to suspect that Mrs Jamieson did not in fact define the situation in quite the same way at this point. Her remark that "religion didn't matter" at a time when she actually did feel that "it was such a shame he was a Protestant" suggests less an acceptance of Mr Jamieson's point of view than an attempt at avoidance. Nevertheless, because Mr Jamieson did take it for agreement, the relationship continued. Indeed from then on, according to Mr Jamieson, "everything went very well", with the religious differences between the couple not being discussed again for quite some time.

The Jamiesons at this point then passed apparently through a stage where Mrs Jamieson underwent a degree of anticipatory socialization with respect to a variety of Mr Jamieson's expectations. As mentioned earlier, she had described herself as having been 'spoilt'. This was a judgment with which Mr Jamieson seems to have concurred, for he quite explicitly contrasted her "having everything her own way" with his own "having been brought up the hard way". He then went on to describe how, during the early months of the courtship, he had felt

that Mrs Jamieson was, as he put it, "rather immature". This was a state of affairs Mr Jamieson resolved to remedy apparently by trying to "educate her a wee bit":

> Well, I always said that if I asked a girl to marry me, that if she hesitated over it I wouldn't ask her again. I frequently told her that when the time came she would have to jump at it. Wee things of this order. So that if something like that did happen she would know my opinion and act accordingly in a way so that her answer would allow for the fact that my opinion was such and such ... In general it was always an attempt to try to tell her my opinions so that when things came up she would act accordingly.

Eventually, Mrs Jamieson did become "more responsible" in her future husband's eyes and he felt able to make a proposal of marriage which was accepted. What followed this acceptance was a period of discussion, instigated by Mr Jamieson, on the doctrinal differences between Protestantism and Catholicism. The purpose of these discussions is again something which was subject to differing interpretations by the partners. As it happens (and in line with Mr Jamieson's expectations) Mrs Jamieson had not hesitated over the proposal of marriage. She was still worried by the prospect of a non-Roman Catholic ceremony and characterized the various discussions around that time as having been designed to help her to go through with it.

> It's important that all these talks now were to help me be married outside the Catholic Church - it wasn't to make me become a Protestant. This was not what we were talking about at this stage, that I could feel I was married, to prevent me from worrying that I might be living in sin.

Mr Jamieson, however, seems to have had a different view, apparently based on the assertion that Mrs Jamieson could identify as a Protestant even with her Catholic beliefs:

> I tried to show her, obviously, my view of the different ideas, you know. I tried to illustrate

> where the Catholic Church and the Protestant Church differed. I'm quite an expert on the R.C. religion. I've had a very good upbringing on what Roman Catholics do and think. ... I spent a lot of time trying to convince her, to show her these differences between the Protestant religion and the Roman Catholic religion. One argument I was trying to put was this. This was one particular thing I tried to emphasise. If she was a Protestant she could believe in all the things she believed in as a Catholic. She could believe in transubstantiation, in the conception of the Virgin Mary. She could believe in all these things, there was no one to stop her. ... If I was a Protestant I couldn't believe in Protestant ideas and be a Catholic - it wasn't possible the other way round. But it's quite possible for a Catholic to believe. You're a Protestant because the main belief in our Church is contained in the Apostles' Creed. They're quite simple and it's not hard for a Catholic to believe in them.

Mr Jamieson seems also at this point to have encouraged Mrs Jamieson to attend Anglican services with him and to accept some instruction from his minister.[1] He appears furthermore to have regarded his attempts as successful for certainly, by the time of the interview, he appears to have considered that his wife was an Anglican, even though she herself was much less willing to accept the designation.

Conclusion

It is clear that couples in the sample proceeded from meeting to marriage in a variety of ways. Moreover, it seems likely that the routes taken by them through courtship do not exhaust the full range of those potentially able to be taken. Informants, it was seen for example, displayed no evidence of a reluctance to contemplate intermarriage of the kind described in other studies, and a possibly important feature of many initially interfaith relationships - a sustained attempt by one partner to proselytize the other - was present in only one instance. Nevertheless, one can detect a number

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[1] These took place in secret because Mrs Jamieson was fearful of her parents' reaction.

of broad patterns in the relationships described.

One important feature of the relationships seen in the sample is perhaps best encapsulated in the statement that patterns of interpersonal adjustment were perceived to have moral consequences. This is something which is in fact true in a general way of courtship. The overwhelmingly favourable treatment accorded by the media to the romantic love complex and the nuclear family (Hart, 1976) makes courtship a status passage typically regarded as natural, inevitable and desirable. Furthermore, as Waller (1938) early recognized in his work on the 'rating and dating' complex, mate-selection in an open marriage system has an inherently competitive character. Both these circumstances produce a situation in which those who remain unmarried are implicitly stigmatized, and where the ability to proceed through courtship can be taken as an indication of moral worth since it points to an individual's normality and to the possession of those social skills necessary to form relationships.

In the present sample progress through courtship could also be taken to indicate the moral status of those involved in the relationship. More specifically, given evidence of establishment in the relationship, couples used what self-disclosure revealed about the differences between them as a basis for what has earlier been called moral disassociation. Where these differences were marginal, as in Groups I and II, one finds a justificatory pattern: couples elaborated a legitimating ideology around the pattern of adjustment they perceived in the relationship, combining it in a contrastive way with a negative definition of the relationship's social environment. In the other groups where self-disclosure revealed differing definitions of the situation, courtship only proceeded either where the stigmatizing implications contained in the partners' respective definitions were suppressed, or where

circumstances produced a major shift of values by one or both partners.

Differing modes of moral disassociation were associated with different kinds of courtship career. In Groups I and II, the justificatory pattern of moral disassociation was related to courtship careers which were parallel in character. Couples in these groups do not appear necessarily to have met the contingencies which faced them in any particular sequence. Self-disclosure could proceed, as seems to have happened with some of the ecumenical couples, prior to the establishment of the relationship or concurrently with it. Furthermore, as again seems to have been true of the ecumenical couples especially, the two could have a reciprocal and cumulative effect on each other and on the justificatory idealogy.

Against this those couples in Groups III and IV, and, to an extent, the Jamiesons in Group V, show some continuity with the low value consensus couples described by Kerckhoff and Davis (1962). Despite their discrepant values these couples proceeded towards marriage, according to Kerckhoff and Davis, because their relationships were independently sustained by additional factors, such as idealization and later the operation of complementary needs.

In the present sample the pattern of very early attraction seen in Group IV suggests that idealization may well have played a role in allowing these couples to establish their relationships. It might also be argued that the Jamiesons fit the Kerckhoff and Davis model rather well in at least one respect. They too were attracted to each other at an early stage. Moreover, it is possible that the episode in which Mr Jamieson attempted to bring Mrs Jamieson's behaviour into line with his expectations represents evidence of a complementary dominance-submission need pattern.

As stated, however, the theory proposed by Kerckhoff and Davis suffers overmuch from precisely a desire to reconcile homogamy theory with the theory of complementary needs. The presence in the sample of those couples seen in Group III who handled the differences between them through the use of inhibitory rules suggests a more general point. That is, the bringing to a relationship of discrepant values, attitudes or definitions is associated with progress towards marriage by means of a serial courtship career. In such a career couples meet the contingencies which derive from the openness of the mate-selection system in Western societies in a sequential way which permits self-disclosure to be limited until after the relationship had been established.

## Chapter 9 The Process of Getting Married

In the normal course of events, any couple deciding to be married will need to make a number of decisions about the wedding ceremony itself. In particular, they will have to decide whether the ceremony is to be of a civil or religious nature, where precisely it is to be performed and who is going to be invited to attend. Most couples, one assumes, will be able to reach such decisions relatively easily, deciding matters perhaps on the basis of cost, or of obligations to kin or a need for a sense of occasion to surround the event itself (Firth et al 1969, 228-233; Barker, 1978).

Where one or both of the partners to a prospective marriage is Roman Catholic an additional consideration which needs to be taken into account are the various stipulations described earlier concerning where, and under what circumstances, according to the canon law of the Roman Catholic Church, a marriage ceremony regarded as valid in the eyes of the Church will take place. It is clear, however, that these requirements, while regarded as no more than reasonable expectations by many Catholics, have often been found by Protestant churchmen, opinion leaders and individual Protestants to be distasteful. The requirement, for example, that a couple be married in a Catholic ceremony has been regarded by Protestants as implying that a couple not so married are actually 'living in sin' whatever their position in the eyes of the civil law.[1] Similarly, the implication that the promise to bring up children as Catholic is somehow required to ensure their being saved from eternal perdition at the hands of a Protestant parent is equally unpalatable.

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[1] See Harris (1972, 137). This has especially unpleasant overtones for Presbyterians in Ireland whose marriage ceremonies were at one time similarly regarded as invalid by the established Church of Ireland.

In Ireland, as has already been seen, couples further have to deal with the legacy of the McCann case which has decisively shaped Protestant opinion regarding the acceptability of a Catholic ceremony in the case of a Catholic-Protestant marriage.

In the present chapter, three areas are considered. Firstly, how couples actually decided whether or not to meet the Catholic requirements. Secondly, how those couples who did follow the Catholic stipulations experienced the process of obtaining the necessary dispensation. Thirdly, some attention will be paid to the actual wedding ceremonies themselves.

Options and decisions

Depending on whether and how they decide to meet the Catholic requirements in such cases, there are five options open to an intermarrying couple with respect to the ceremony. These are:

(a) marriage before a Roman Catholic priest after having made the necessary declaration and having received the appropriate dispensation;

(b) as above, but with an additional dispensation 'from the canonical form' allowing a Protestant minister to be present;

(c) marriage before a Protestant minister;

(d) marriage before a civil registrar;

(e) a possibility not so far mentioned - (c) or (d) with 'rectification'; i.e. where the marriage is at a later date made valid in the eyes of the Roman Catholic Church by the couple remarrying before a Catholic priest following the procedure outlined in (a).[1]

Although no very detailed evidence is available, there is some basis for believing that the first of these options is to be found most commonly in Northern Ireland. A majority of Catholic-Protestant marriages,

[1] Technically speaking, there are in canon law two forms of rectification, depending on whether there are children from the marriage. These are 'convalidation' and 'sanatio in radice'. Practically speaking there is no difference between them.

in other words, are celebrated in Roman Catholic churches after the appropriate declaration has been made and a dispensation granted.[1] As indicated in a previous chapter, Masterson (1973, 64) was able to obtain a figure of 534 for the number of 'mixed' marriages taking place in 1971 in Catholic churches in the Roman Catholic diocese of Down and Connor. In the same year, however, Roman Catholic-Anglican marriages being notified to the Church of Ireland authorities over a slightly larger area - the Anglican dioceses of Down, Connor and Dromore - numbered only 13.[2]

Table 19 which sets out the mode of celebration of marriages for couples in the interview sample similarly shows a predominance of Catholic ceremonies.

TABLE 19

| Married couples in the sample: Mode of celebration of marriages | |
|---|---|
| | Number |
| Marriage before a Catholic priest with dispensation .. .. | 14* |
| As above, with additional dispensation from the canonical form .. .. .. .. .. .. .. .. | 2** |
| Marriage before a Protestant minister . .. .. .. .. | 3 |
| Marriage before a Civil Registrar .. .. .. .. .. | 1 |
| Marriage not before a Catholic priest but with a subsequent rectification . .. .. .. .. .. | 1 |
| Other .. .. .. .. .. .. .. .. .. .. .. | 2*** |

* Two of the engaged couples had also firmly decided on this option.

** In one of these cases the dispensation from the impediment of mixed religion had been granted by a bishop in Northern Ireland while the dispensation from the canonical form was granted by a bishop in another country where the ceremony was actually performed.

*** One case where the couple were married by a ship's captain. One case where the ceremony was performed before a Catholic priest but apparently without a dispensation.

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[1] In a recent report by the Joint Standing Committee on Mixed Marriage of the Roman Catholic Church and the Irish Council of Churches (1977) the claim was made by the Protestant members that more couples have been requesting marriages in a Protestant church.

[2] These data were obtained from 'notice books' for the Diocese of Connor and the United Diocese of Down and Dromore kindly made available for inspection by the Rev. C.R. Mitchell, Diocesan Secretary.

The reasons behind the excess of Catholic ceremonies shown in Table 16 are not immediately clear from the interview material itself. Certainly the existence of the Roman Catholic regulation on 'mixed' marriages is of some importance but it is also clear that overall the picture is more than a little complex. One can see, for instance, a number of cases where the outcome was a particular kind of ceremony but where the decision-making process which led to that outcome differed from case to case. Conversely, it also seems to have been possible for the same process of decision-making to lead in some cases to a Catholic ceremony and in others to a Protestant one.[1] Further, as one can perhaps judge from the notes to Table 16 there were, even in the present small sample, a few cases having a somewhat idiosyncratic character.

Reference has already been made to a number of cases in which bargaining took place over the ceremony. In these situations a Protestant partner would agree to be married in a Catholic ceremony provided it was understood that within the relationship itself the Catholic partner would be prepared to have recourse to contraception.

Beyond this, it seems that in deciding about the kind of ceremony they should have, couples are normally influenced by any one of at least five further factors. These are (a) the relative power of the Catholic Church, (b) the 'balance of salience' in the relationship, (c) the symbolic aspects of the ceremony, (d) the influence of parents, and (e) expedience.

(a) The relative power of the Catholic Church

Mayer (1961) has argued that the outcome of pre-marital decision-making on issues like the ceremony is largely determined by the internal dynamics of the relationship itself. This is so, he would argue, because there are no general prescriptions which would indicate to a couple what

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[1] In a given case a number of processes may also be at work simultaneously or sequentially.

they should do. Further, in his view, specific prescriptions as laid down by religious institutions and organizations are for the most part ineffective. Since these are, according to Mayer, usually mutually contradictory, they tend to be as a result self-cancelling so forcing the decision back once again on the couple themselves. To the extent that couples in the sample rarely cited general norms or specific religious prescriptions as the basis for whatever decision they eventually reached, Mayer may very well be right. It seems unrealistic to suppose, however, that the requirements of religious organizations or institutions are rendered completely ineffectual simply because they are contradictory. This quite clearly neglects a very important dimension - the relative power of the institutions themselves. As the power of a religious institution or organization is normative in character, it must rely for compliance on the "manipulation of esteem, prestige and ritualistic symbols" (Etzioni, 1969,61). By refusing to acknowledge as valid a marriage not contracted under its auspices, this the Catholic Church is able to do, and rather more effectively than the Protestant churches which by and large do not apply the same conditions for validity.

Couples could quite clearly recognize this relative power of the Catholic Church. Indeed for some Catholic partners the possibility that they may not be actually married in the eyes of the Church if they did not follow the Catholic prescriptions was one that caused them a good deal of concern. This is fairly clearly reflected, for instance, in the comments of Mr McLaughlin. Even though, in the end, for reasons to be explained later, the McLaughlins were married in a Protestant ceremony, their initial decision had been to be married in the Catholic Church. This was precisely because, as Mr McLaughlin put it,

> We thought that if the Catholics insisted we be married in their church and the Protestant church didn't, it would be better for my peace of mind if we were married in a Catholic church. Although I had stopped practising I still would have liked to have been married in the Church so I would be 'alright'.

A similar concern seems to have been expressed in a number of other cases with the Catholic partner feeling as Mrs Pearson did that "I wouldn't feel properly married in a Registry Office". In such circumstance it was usual for the Protestant partner to recognize the position the Catholic was in and acquiesce. As Mr Pearson put it,

> ... because of the rules of the Church she couldn't compromise, even if she wanted to, so I had to be the one to compromise.

(b) The 'balance of salience'

In the inter-church debate on the question of how and where 'mixed' marriage ceremonies should be celebrated, the Roman Catholic Church has not infrequently been charged with exercising its power unjustly, and in a way detrimental to the rights of the Protestant partner. It is therefore interesting to note that for the majority of the couples an explicit appeal to formal religious prescriptions was not in evidence. Instead the issue of the ceremony seems to have been resolved more often than not on the basis of what one might call 'the balance of salience' within the relationship. Typically, that is, the partners come to accept that for one of them "religion" or the religious nature of the ceremony "means something". The wishes of this partner are then allowed to take precedence in the matter of the ceremony.

One case, for instance, which comes readily to mind and which resulted in a Catholic ceremony is that of the Cunninghams. As already seen in the previous chapter Mrs Cunningham desired to have a Catholic ceremony and was able eventually to secure her future husband's agreement to this precisely because "I suppose it does mean something to me". Similarly, with the Warners, a Catholic ceremony could result because Mr Warner felt that,

> ... in a way the logic was irrefutable because her religion does mean something to her and mine doesn't mean that much to me at all. Although I suppose it was hard for me to accept but I just had to overcome my background.

It is also important to note, though, that reasoning of this sort could lead quite readily to a Protestant ceremony. The Jamiesons provide a somewhat extreme example of this but a similar pattern can also be found in the case of the Coyles. Here Mrs Coyle's wish to have a Protestant ceremony because

> ... my religion does mean something to me and so I wanted to be married in my own church and not in a Registry Office or in a Catholic Church,

could be readily accepted by Mr Coyle. He felt, as he put it, that

> ... as I say, I'm a Catholic in the sense of ethnic origins but that's as far as it goes

and he could further recall how, as a result, he had

> ... told her father the night before we were married that I didn't practise and that I was quite happy to be married in a Protestant Church.

In a number of respects, of course, it is difficult to draw a firm line between couples for whom the balance of salience was important and those we have just previously described. This is because it is by no means clear how far the assertion that "religion" somehow "means something" to an individual also implies acceptance of official religious norms or a fear of sanctions. (On this point in relation to church attendance see Hornsby-Smith, Lee and Reilly, 1977.) It should be noted however that making a decision in line with the balance of salience is quite likely to be compatible with religious norms. The somewhat unarticulated awareness that religion - however defined - is important to the individual together with the notion of the acceptability of respecting another's sincerely held religious convictions can be recognized as elements of what has come to be known as 'common religion'. This term, coined by Towler and Chamberlin (1973), refers to a set of non-institutionalized religious beliefs and orientations towards religious matters, having often a self-evident and unquestioned

character, which appears to be widely diffused throughout British society. Given the ready assent to statements of doctrinal orthodoxy found in a number of surveys in Northern Ireland (O.R.C. 1969, Rose 1971), one should have some reservations about extending the British findings uncritically to the Northern Irish context. Even so, given their age and social position, elements of common religion are unlikely to be absent from among these couples.

If this view is correct and common religion is involved here, then Mayer's contention concerning the lack of general prescriptions relating to the ceremony is further undermined. Indeed, it seems rather that the normative order may be distinctly partial towards the partner whose attachment to religion - again however defined - is the greater.

Moreover this thought leads on to the possibility of at least a partial explanation of the predominance of Catholic ceremonies we have found in the sample and which we suspect is also to be found more generally. Although there is no necessary 'fit' between a subjective attachment to one's religion and ritual and devotional performance, it would be surprising if it were entirely absent. Since the literature would suggest that women are more likely to be ritually and devotionally active than men,[1] it is plausible to suggest that overall the balance of salience will tend to favour the wishes of the female partner. As we have already seen, however, there tend to be in Northern Ireland more Catholic women in 'mixed' marriages than there are Protestant women. It may very well be the combination of these two factors which produces the excess of Catholic ceremonies.

That this explanation might be plausible is seen by looking at the 14 cases in the sample in which the partners were married in a Catholic ceremony. Taking frequency of church attendance at the time of

[1] For a review of the literature on this see Argyle and Beit-Hallahmi (1975).

marriage as a crude indication of subjective attachment to religion, one sees that there are 8 cases in which the Catholic partner attended church more regularly than the Protestant partner. In only one of these cases however was this Catholic partner male.

(c) The symbolic aspects of the ceremony

To the extent, for example, that relations of concubinage between Blacks and Whites in the Southern United States might be considered very often as marriages consigned to invisibility, one can appreciate perhaps that certain kinds of marriage ceremony might be seen as indicating something about the nature of intergroup relations in a given society. In the sample there was on the part of a few couples a certain degree of sensitivity to the symbolic aspects of choosing a particular kind of ceremony. As one might have expected, it was those couples whom we have described previously as ecumenically oriented who tended to display most clearly such a sensitivity to the ceremony's symbolic aspects. For them, the changes in the Catholic regulations on 'mixed' marriages which came about in 1970 were particularly important, since they could be seen as implying some recognition of the Protestant partner as a fellow Christian. Two of the three such couples in the sample had not for reasons of timing been able to take advantage of these changes and had, in the manner of the first set of couples described above, chosen an "ordinary" Catholic ceremony - a matter of considerable regret to them. Only the third couple were in a position to avail themselves of the new regulations and this they were determined to do by having a marriage service in which both a Catholic priest and a Protestant minister participated.[1]

Such a service, they believed, enabled them, as they put it, to "define the marriage positively rather than negatively", a point

[1]The identity of this couple has been left unspecified. Such ceremonies are still comparatively rare in Northern Ireland and further detail might enable them to be identified.

which was explicitly underlined, it seems, during the service itself. Said the wife,

> This was brought out at the wedding in that at the wedding it was not pretended that this wasn't a mixed marriage but the priest stood up and said, "this is an interdenominational marriage; I'm not going to call it a mixed marriage. I don't like the word - it's an interconfessional marriage. It's a sign of where the Church should be going". You know, right in the middle of the wedding drew attention to the fact that there were two different faiths and used it positively.

By contrast, the Sullivans' wedding was just as determinedly secular. Neither partner, according to Mr Sullivan, "actually believed in marriage", and because of this they had simply begun to live together. It was only after some months, at the instigation of Mrs Sullivan's father who was worried about her legal status should children arrive, that a decision to go through a ceremony was finally made. As this was regarded by the couple as "just a formality" - since both partners had a strongly secularised orientation - the attempt was made to avoid giving the ceremony any kind of religious, or even non-mundane, connotation. A civil ceremony was therefore chosen. Further, any sort of sense of ritual occasion was further de-emphasised by arranging the event to coincide with the visit to the city, for a conference, of the friend who was to be the best man. The couple, further, did not have any sort of honeymoon but rather spent the evening of the wedding with this friend at the cinema.

(d) The influence of parents

No other couple in the sample needed to be persuaded as were the Sullivans to be married at all. There were, though, some instances where attempts were made by parents to influence the kind of ceremony which was chosen. These were usually unsuccessful unless, for instance,

a couple like the Curries who had no strong preferences decided to follow parental wishes simply "to keep them happy". As pointed out in the chapter which follows, negative reaction of a general sort by parents tended, at least for the couples in the sample, to be frequently ineffectual. This appears to be equally true as far as the issue of the ceremony was concerned, and one suspects for much the same reason. Couples were rarely exposed to the full force of negative sanctioning since this was rarely faced by the partners as a couple. Negative reaction was rarely directed at a spouse candidate except, that is, where a culturally sanctioned occasion for the expression of reservations about the marriage took place, as in, for example, a formal spouse-candidate presentation. Certainly it seems only to have been in cases where both partners simultaneously perceived parental unhappiness about a particular form of ceremony that they found themselves altering their decision.

Both the McLaughlins and the Courtneys, for example, had originally decided on a Catholic ceremony. The McLaughlins, as noted earlier, felt that such a ceremony would leave Mr McLaughlin 'alright' as far as the Church was concerned, while the decision in the Courtneys' case had been made on the basis of the balance of salience. Having made the decision Mr McLaughlin and Mr Courtney both sought permission to be married from their prospective spouses' parents who in both cases were Protestant.[1] In doing so, however, they very quickly became aware of a depth of feeling towards the marriage itself and towards a Catholic ceremony which had not previously been evident to them.

The response both made when faced with this situation was to try to find some way of having the sort of "joint" ceremony alluded to earlier. In both cases, however, a fatal mistake was made at this point in that the attempt was made to obtain such a ceremony by

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[1] The reasons behind their asking for permission are explained more fully in the next chapter.

approaching the local Catholic bishop directly. From the point of view of the Church bureaucracy this is an impermissible procedure and in both cases was accordingly rebuffed.[1]

Left because of this with a feeling that they had been "let down" by the Church, both Mr Courtney and Mr McLaughlin felt justified in acceding to the wishes of their prospective in-laws by going ahead with a non-Catholic ceremony.[2] Mr McLaughlin, for instance, regarded the letter he had received in reply to his approach as a "cold and impersonal sort of effort" and continued,

> That made me feel, well, "stuff them", we'd just get married in the Protestant Church. A friend of mine, a Catholic, had married a Protestant in a Protestant church in Wales and I thought if it's alright for him why does the bit of sea between us make all that much difference? So, I thought I'd done my best to get a Catholic wedding and couldn't so I thought I was quite justified in then going ahead and getting married in a Protestant church.

(e) Expedience

Finally, here, there are two couples in the sample for whom the choice of a ceremony was dictated by expedience. This is very clearly seen in the case of one couple where the prospective husband was a partner in a family business which dealt extensively with the Catholic Church. As he explained,

> I would say about 95% of all our business is work that comes from the Catholic Church so when I was thinking what decisions I was going to make I had to be careful that I didn't inflict something on the partners and subsequently on my own family through my own pigheadedness. If we had decided to be married in a Protestant church then obviously this is something which could have had a backlash and quite a severe one. I summed up the situation, put it to her and she agreed to marry me in my own church.

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[1] Strictly speaking, in matters of this kind one is expected to take the case in the first instance to one's local priest.

[2] Although, because of the reaction of the Catholic parents, one of these couples went through a later "rectification" in a Catholic church - without, however, telling the Protestant parents.

In the other case, the couple were presented with an opportunity to be married which they had not previously envisaged. Initially they had decided to elope, make their way to England and be married there. By chance, however, they happened to find themselves talking to the captain of the ferry which was taking them across the Irish Sea. Unsuspectingly, answering in the affirmative their question about whether ships' captains could indeed perform wedding ceremonies, he was pressed into service and somewhat reluctantly married them at sea.

Obtaining a dispensation

As we pointed out those couples who decided on a Catholic ceremony needed to obtain a dispensation from the local bishop to allow the wedding ceremony to go ahead. For the majority of couples who proceeded in this way the experience of actually obtaining a dispensation does not appear to have been a particularly unpleasant one. Indeed, couples approaching a priest in order to obtain a dispensation and to arrange the details of the wedding seem to have found him relatively accommodating. Mrs Kearn's parish priest, for instance, "was very good about the dispensation", while for the Parks "the whole thing was so simple and quick".[1]

It seems only to have been in a few instances that couples were able to detect what they felt to be a certain attitude of reluctance or truculence about the making of the necessary arrangements. Mrs King, for example, had extreme difficulty in even making an appointment to see her local curate about a dispensation, while Mr Beggs found the priest they initially approached to be officious and off-putting. Similarly, it seems only to have been occasionally that a priest would make some negative comment about the 'mixed' character of a proposed marriage. Even here, though, such disapproval as was offered seems to

[1] A further aspect of this is that although someone like Mr Park would be afraid that he would be subjected to "the hard sell", only one Protestant partner complained about an attempt at proselytization by a priest.

have been relatively mild. The initial comment of Mrs Shaw's parish priest on first learning that her husband-to-be was a Protestant was "That's not good." Beyond this however he seems to have made no further comment. The Cunninghams were told of the difficulties they would face, although it seems that once the priest had actually rehearsed what these difficulties might be he then went on to be "very helpful".

In part, it seems, one reason for this absence of disapproval was an element of self-selection which seems to have been at work. Providing the ceremonial form is still adhered to (and in the case of a 'mixed' marriage the necessary dispensation granted), there is in practice in Catholicism a fair degree of flexibility in deciding where one is to be married and by whom. This in turn permits at least the possibility of a certain amount of 'shopping around'. Thus both the Beggs and the Kings after their initial unsatisfactory experiences could go elsewhere to be married. In a number of other cases, the priest approached was a family friend who might be counted on to be sympathetic, or perhaps a younger man who was potentially more likely in the couples' eyes to be "liberal". (Mrs Pearson, to take a case in point, "went up to the church and looked for the youngest, most approachable-looking priest".) There is also one further instance of a particular priest being avoided because of his reputation for taking a stance towards 'mixed' marriages not far removed from that already mentioned in the cases of Mr and Mrs Beggs and Mr and Mrs King. According to Mr McQuillan, the "local folklore" had it that the parish priest in this locality

> ... was opposed to having mixed marriages in his church and it doesn't matter that people go to other churches, but he just doesn't have it there.

Mr McQuillan, as a result, "never contemplated getting married there" and chose instead to have the ceremony in Belfast.

Self-selection, however, does not seem to have been the sole factor at work. In what appears to be the only study of its kind, John Fulton of the Irish School of Ecumenics interviewed a sample of Roman Catholic parish clergy about their attitudes and practice with respect to religious intermarriage. For many of these priests, he concluded (Fulton, 1975, 158),

> legal[1] considerations had been ... the first things they had encountered and taken for granted. It also seems that such matters had not been experienced as irritants impeding the essential pastoral task, but as part and parcel of what intermarriage was supposed to have been. In general, their chief pre-occupation had been to obtain the dispensation.

The interview material would seem to suggest that a similar pattern also obtains for the diocese within which the majority of the couples were married. Certainly couples on first contacting the priest about the marriage were told with some frequency, it would seem, that "we would have to get a dispensation" or that "he (the priest) would have to send a form away to the bishop".[2] It is important to stress here, though, that even if priests were not thus adopting the sort of counselling approach evidently favoured by Fulton, neither did they translate the legal aspects of obtaining a dispensation into any sort of inquisitorial activity. Some, indeed, seemed to have stressed to couples the rather routine nature of the application. According to Mrs Shaw, for example, the priest who married them

> ... made us feel that certainly it was all just a matter of form, that he just had to send the form away and that no questions would be asked ...

One suspects that this air of routine and the prospect that the dispensation could be obtained without too much difficulty was actually rather reassuring as far as the couples were concerned. Most of them, not unnaturally, were anxious to avoid delay or difficulty in

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[1] In this context, of course, 'legal' refers to canon law rather than civil law.

[2] Another aspect of the priest's concern for the legal aspects of getting married and one which irked a number of Protestant partners was the insistence that baptismal certificates be obtained.

their getting to the altar. Few had made, for example, any firm decision about the religious upbringing of any children they might have.[1] It was usually realized that making a declaration in favour of their Catholic upbringing was from the Church's view a prerequisite for the granting of a dispensation. In most cases, however, couples preferred to leave the final decision on the matter until the children had actually arrived or else they had in mind some sort of broad compromise solution.[2] Faced with a situation where they had to declare themselves, the couples chose in nearly every case not to put the acceptability of their views to the test. The promise or declaration was made but with its significance, applicability or legitimacy being discounted.

Several couples - the Pearsons, the Wilsons or the Kearns - for example spoke of the promise or declaration as being "just a bit of red-tape" or "something that had to be gone through". Mr Laverty recounted that,

> ... we signed the declaration in order to get married. I think it provided us with a good deal of annoyance at the time but I took the view it was made under duress and therefore it had no legal status at all.[3]

Again Mr Fannin, speaking of his wife, could point out how,

> ... she decided that if they were going to make all that fuss over getting a little piece of paper signed, well, she'd sign it and keep them all quiet.

Not surprisingly, proceeding on this sort of course meant on occasion that couples were called upon to dissemble in their encounter with the priest. This can be seen in a general way with Mrs King, who took the lead in the discussion with the priest and who "answered very quickly" when a number of issues were raised so as to forestall the possibility of her husband-to-be giving an inappropriate reply. In the

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[1] Once again this contrasts quite sharply with Mayer's Jewish-Gentile couples.

[2] Such as sending them to a Quaker school or giving them a Catholic primary education with a non-denominational secondary education.

[3] It must be emphasised that in speaking of "duress" Mr Laverty is referring to the fact that the couple could not be married without making this declaration. There is no suggestion that the Lavertys were physically coerced in any way.

McQuillans' case, the wife could not actually be present when the appropriate forms were signed. As Mr McQuillan recalled, however,

> The priest had to fill up the forms. There were a couple of things I was asked about her attitude ... and it was a question of just filling up the most favourable of reactions, more or less which she would have.

At the same time, and perhaps more importantly, the fact that the priests themselves tended not to take a particularly inquisitorial stand suggests another possibility. It may conceivably be that the encounter with the priest is one in which a tacit reluctance to raise or pursue difficulties is present on <u>both</u> sides. This, of course, is not something which can be discerned directly from the data. Mr Fannin's perhaps overdrawn account, however, would suggest that a priest will find it convenient on occasion to expedite the proceedings to fit in with his schedule:

> When we arrived to sign the papers promising to bring the children up as Catholics, his (the priest's) golf-clubs were sitting in the hallway, there was somebody waiting outside in his VW and as far as he was concerned as long as I just put pen to paper and let him away because all the rest of them were standing on the first tee somewhere (laughs) that was it.

More telling, possibly, is the one instance in the sample of the response made by a priest to an ambiguous statement made by a couple in response to a direct question. In this case - which involved the Parks - the couple were asked about their intentions regarding the Catholic upbringing and education of any children they might have. On hearing only that they would send their children to "the best school we could", the priest merely remarked that "Catholic schools are the best anyway" and proceeded with the interview.

Now, of course, the priest may have reported frankly on the application form for the dispensation the less than clear-cut statement

the Parks had made. The bishop may have given them the benefit of the doubt and granted the dispensation anyway. There is no means of knowing. On the other hand, it is at least a plausible hypothesis that the priest had rather translated the couple's ambiguous answer into a written form which defined the situation for his superior as being one that was normal and routine.[1] In this way the possibility of the application being rejected could be minimized.

Further, the suspicion that this may not be altogether uncommon lies in a number of cases within the sample where the priest might also have had grounds for supposing that all the conditions required for the dispensation had not actually been met. In one of these cases, for example, the Catholic partner while promising to "remain steadfast in the Catholic faith" also chose to express some doubts about its authenticity. The Protestant partner in another case refused at all to give an undertaking that the children would be brought up as Catholic. In the third case, the Protestant husband-to-be while holding back apparently from actually arguing with the priest still "let him know that I thought his ideas on divorce were absurd". However, in all of these cases a marriage ceremony performed under the Catholic rite still went ahead. There is some doubt as to whether an application for a dispensation was actually made in one case. In the other two cases the dispensation was apparently obtained without difficulty.

If priests did manipulate the application forms to avoid the possibility of rejection, one can only speculate on their motivation for doing so. Indeed, an interesting area for further research would be to see whether such behaviour resulted from a change in ideology within the Church[2] or is merely the result of priests adapting to the exigencies

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[1] In a study of marriage-annulment procedures in the Catholic Church Salter (1969) has pointed out that while Catholic theology and canon law see the priest as merely a conduit through which material relating to the application for the annulment is passed, the de facto power of the priest to define the situation for those who will proceed with the case is very great.

[2] The changes in Roman Catholicism since the Second Vatican Council have variously been described as encouraging a "situation-based ideology" (Hornsby-Smith, 1976), "interpersonalism" as a basis for priest-laity relations (Goldner, et al 1973), or a widespread conviction that "sacraments are for people" (Salter 69).

of their work situation. In other words, do the changes in Roman Catholicism since the Second Vatican Council allow the priest to decide that more flexibility in dealing with cases of the kind we have described is appropriate? Or is it merely that priests often prefer to avoid potentially complicating situations which may be difficult and time-consuming to resolve and which might in consequence bring them to the attention of their superiors?

A note on dispensations from the canonical form

There were, as noted above, two cases in the sample where a dispensation from the canonical form had been obtained. In one of these permission had been granted by the local bishop for a ceremony involving the participation of a Protestant minister within the diocese. In the other case, while a dispensation from the impediment of mixed religion was granted by the local bishop, the dispensation from the canonical form was granted by a foreign bishop in whose diocese the ceremony actually took place.

On the basis of information of an informal nature it seems to be the case that further instances of both these types have occurred in recent years. However, they seem to be sufficiently few in number for one to be cautious about describing the cases in any detail; one fear being, as indicated earlier, that to do so might leave the couples and those who may have helped them open to identification. Only one or two general comments on the topic are therefore offered.

It seems that an important factor which allowed these couples to obtain a dispensation from the canonical form was that they had resources of various kinds available to them which were not available to other couples whose desire for some form of 'joint' ceremony had been frustrated. These resources were financial in the case of one of

the couples in the sense that funds were needed to travel abroad for the ceremony.[1] The other major resource both of these couples seem to have had was the benefit of specialist advice and assistance. They were able to know, therefore, the precise options open to them and the basis on which the particular option they chose could be made available to them. Additionally, specialist advice could mean that on the one hand they were able to avoid some of the more obvious pitfalls in applying for a dispensation. It prevented them for instance from making the mistake some other couples did in trying to apply directly to the bishop for a dispensation rather than going through the "proper channels". On the other hand, too, someone capable of giving the sort of specialist advice they required was not unlikely to have a certain status within the institution itself which might, conceivably, then work in the couple's favour.

From all this it would seem to be plausible to suggest that the probability of obtaining a dispensation from the canonical form is higher for couples who are themselves high in status.[2] (Interesting to note in this context that in 1975 a prominent 'moderate' politician in Northern Ireland - who is not in the sample - was married in a Catholic ceremony in which a Protestant minister participated.) Whether this will cease to be the case as time goes on - as inter-church discussion continues and the procedure itself becomes more common, or knowledge of how such dispensations can be obtained increases through the activity of groups of ecumenical couples - remains, however, to be seen.

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[1] Since it is the Roman Catholic hierarchies in Western Europe and North American rather than those in the Anglo-Celtic islands who seem to have taken a more relaxed stand on the issue of the canonical form, long-distance travel (which of course is more expensive) is difficult to avoid.

[2] There seem to have been some cases where a dispensation from the canonical form could be obtained if the Protestant minister to be involved was a relative of one of the parties. A submission from the Protestant members of the Standing Committee on Mixed Marriages set up jointly by the Irish Council of Churches and the Roman Catholic Church refers, for example, to the "more sympathetic treatment usually experienced where the Protestant is the son or daughter of a clergyman ..." (Joint Standing Committee on Mixed Marriages, 1977).

The wedding

Having decided on the type of ceremony they were to have the couples still had to go through the service itself. How they did this is discussed briefly here, looking at the extent to which parents, relatives and friends were in attendance, the setting in which the ceremony was performed and the festivities which accompanied it.[1]

Table 20 shows that in about 65% of cases both sets of available parents[2] - Catholic and Protestant - came to the wedding.

TABLE 20

Attendance by available parents at the wedding ceremony

| Attendance by | Number |
|---|---|
| Both sets of parents | 15 |
| Catholic parents only | 2 |
| Protestant parents only | 3 |
| Neither set of parents | 2 |
| Others | 1* |

*Case in which there were two ceremonies - one attended by Protestant parents only, the other by Catholic parents only.

This is somewhat less than the 72% of available parents attending the wedding services of those in Firth, Hubert and Forge's (1970, 235) London sample. Nevertheless, in a majority of cases neither the interreligious nature of the marriage nor the form of the ceremony eventually chosen was a hindrance to the attendance of 'both sides' at the ceremony. This suggests anticipating a point made later, that a couple who decide to enter an interreligious marriage in Northern Ireland will not necessarily be devoid of support from significant others.

[1] Unfortunately it did not prove possible to attend any of the wedding ceremonies of those in the sample.

[2] Available in the sense of still being alive and capable of attending.

A similar conclusion would seem to derive from the accounts couples gave of the acceptance by relatives and friends of invitations to the wedding. This material resists tabular presentation since couples could rarely recollect the numerical details well enough. However one gains the impression that except in cases where the parents stayed away, nearly all of those who were invited actually attended. Only on a few occasions does one hear of a relative - almost invariably described as "an old aunt" or a "distant cousin" - refusing to come to the wedding service. Indeed there even seems to have been one or two occasions where relatives who were Orangemen attended a Catholic ceremony (risking expulsion from the order for doing so). It may well be that the norms surrounding attendance at a wedding ceremony are particularly strong in Northern Ireland (see Harris, 1972) and are only overridden when conflict over the marriage is so great that parents do not attend or where kinship ties are relatively distant.[1]

Slightly less than half of the weddings could probably be described as "quiet" affairs where little attempt had been made to invite more than immediate families and close friends. It is difficult to avoid the conclusion - hardly unexpected - that where there had been conflict with parents a small wedding of this sort frequently did occur. At the same time, it is clear that one can find more than one reason for ceremonial modesty. For a number of couples, particularly those where both partners had been students and who, therefore, tended to have small savings, the obvious expense attached to a large wedding was a deterrent. Thus, though they seem to have been somewhat better off in this respect than some other couples, the Wilsons avoided a large wedding on the grounds of cost, although Mrs Wilson's long-standing

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[1] It is true though that in at least one case a couple did not invite relatives with Orange connections "to avoid putting them in difficulty". As it happens in this case at least one of these relatives turned up anyway. In another case the husband reported that their worries in this regard were allayed when a relative who was deeply involved in the Orange Order "was fortunate from his point of view to fall under a bus and so was in hospital at the time of the wedding".

estrangement from her father also seems to have played a part:

> We had a very quiet wedding. We went to Dublin for it. We didn't really want to have a big thing because of the money we would have to spend, and anyway I didn't want to have to walk down the aisle on my father's arm. So we had it very quiet.

On the other hand, many of the other weddings resembled what might well have taken place anyway had the partners been of the same faith. Here and there, indeed, the fact that the marriage was a 'mixed' one seems actually to have acted as an incentive to have a relatively noteworthy event. The Shaws' wedding, for example, seems to have been a large, rather visible affair. This was of Mrs Shaw's own choosing and was directly related to the fact that she was marrying a Protestant. As she explained,

> There's a lot of this mixed marriage idea that you sneak away to some wee chapel and you get married about 8 o'clock in the morning or about 9 o'clock at night. I think a lot of it was really stubbornness on my part, that I was going to get married at 2 o'clock in the middle of the day, in the middle of the summer when _____ was packed with holidaymakers and I was going to show them that I wasn't afraid to do it.

Again, one has the further suspicion (and it is little more than that) that where a Protestant ceremony had been obtained there was some tendency encouraged by parents to 'parade' the fact by inviting a large number of guests.

Despite the observation just made, it would also be true to say that very often couples did take the opportunity in the planning of the ceremony to consider how the service or the setting would affect the sensibilities of their guests. The more ecumenically minded couples were as one might expect particularly active in their attempts to design a form of service which would be meaningful across individual Christian traditions. The McQuillans, for instance, "invited friends

of various denominations to participate in the service, you know, by giving different kinds of readings and in the music." Further they, like other couples, deliberately avoided having Mass to accompany the service. This would have meant the distribution of Communion, which the Catholic regulations would only have permitted to be given to Catholic guests - a symbol in the couple's view of divisiveness.

Other couples, perhaps less theologically aware, went in a similar direction but mainly in an attempt to avoid giving offence. Hymns familiar to 'both sides' were often chosen, for example, and some attention paid in a number of instances to the setting itself. In particular there was some inclination on the part of those couples who were being married in a Catholic ceremony to avoid churches overly laden with the more devotionalistic manifestations of Catholic ecclesiastical art and design. We can find Mr Fannin, therefore, relating that

> The church (where the wedding was held) is very new and very stark and I knew if Ruth's relatives came it wouldn't be like going into any of the older churches with the old Irish ecclesiastical baroque trimmings traipsing all over the place.

While in a similar vein another Catholic husband remarked "we wanted something plain and simple, you know, not too many flaming hearts".

There are, of course, no data which would allow one to assess the extent to which such efforts were appreciated. That the couples may have been right to make the effort, however, is perhaps suggested by Mrs Daly's comment on the reaction of her mother on entering a somewhat ornate Catholic church for the first time:

> ... all the time she was in the church she looked absolutely miserable. I think she thought the ceiling was going to fall in on her, this terrible place. It was a very short ceremony but she was still miserable with all these pictures all around her and so on. She only brightened up when she got back to the reception.

Even so, there was no other case in which an informant noticed any displeasure during the service. Neither did any case occur in which there was direct disruption of the marriage ceremony while the service was going on. There was only one case, moreover, in any way similar to that described by Leyton in his study of "Aughnaboy" and in which "a police escort was necessary at the wedding ceremony to protect the couple from the wrath of their families" (Leyton, 1975, 57). The case in question involved the Jamiesons who had been subjected to a great deal of hostile reaction from Mrs Jamieson's mother. Even here, though, it seems that threat and rumour exceeded the amount of 'sabotage' that actually took place. As Mrs Jamieson recalled,

> After the invitations went out, my mother guessed which of my friends would be invited and told them not to go and rang the paper and cancelled any photographs ... So on the day of the wedding we were really expecting trouble. My brother had warned me that they would have the place blown up ... I'm beginning to think that people heard other rumours because I arrived quite late for the wedding. One of my friends then made the comment when I arrived late that they thought I had been kidnapped, so I think there was this rumour going round that I would be kidnapped and not make the church.

The reception

Having looked at the wedding ceremony, it is also necessary to consider, briefly, the reception. One thing which worried many couples was that having persuaded relatives and friends from both sides to attend the wedding the guests would interact at the reception in a strained or embarrassed manner or that there would be a noticeable tendency for the two sets of guests not to intermingle. Some couples therefore took some trouble to ensure that this did not in fact happen. The Parks, for example, in order to avoid a situation where "the bride's friends stayed on one side of the room and the bridegroom's on the other"

decided to organize the seating arrangements in order to "mingle them, to mix them all up", while in a similar fashion the Beggs also "mixed them up deliberately ... we'd deliberately worked out who was sort of similar from the two families and put them together".

A further, though less commonly voiced, fear concerned what might happen in a situation where there was less of an atmosphere of decorousness than inside a church or a registry office and where participants were no longer constrained into a passive spectator role. As a general rule, those who participate in informal or semi-formal occasions in Northern Ireland tend to be drawn from within the boundaries of the same confessional group. This partly reflects, as one might expect, the homogeneity of primary relationships but it should also be clear that such occasions may involve the release of tensions and inhibitions in a way which might threaten the conventions of intergroup interaction. Drink flows in most cases, the consumption of which might lead to a loss of self-control or displays of aggressiveness.[1] Similarly, music - with its attendant danger of partisan songs being introduced - may be expected. There appear to have been no explicit attempts to deal with this danger, perhaps because to do so may have been to draw attention to what it was hoped would not happen; nevertheless, it did remain a source of apprehension in one or two cases. As Mrs Kearns remarked, for example, "I must admit that I was a bit worried that people would start once they had a few drinks in them".

In the event, however, worries about what might happen at the reception proved to have been almost entirely misplaced. The only possibly negative comment about the proceedings came from Mrs Courtney who noted that her uncle, an Orangeman, had "avoided Richard's eyes all the time and didn't shake hands with him". Otherwise, the receptions

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[1] It is interesting to note that one reason given for patterns of Jewish sobriety has been the need to retain self-control in a situation of vulnerability (Snyder, 1962).

appear to have been affairs which suffered from neither a lack of conviviality nor from its disruptive excess. Couples observed for themselves that, as one husband put it,

> ... everybody had a few jars and forgot all about it. That was it. No trouble at all ...

or else they had received reports that "things went extremely well even after we left" or that "everybody got on well".

Presumably, one imagines, that since the situation was clearly defined in advance as a 'mixed' one, the appropriate efforts were made to minimize the possibility of conflict. (On 'advance warning' to ensure conflict avoidance, see Barritt and Carter, 1972, 57-58.) Furthermore, most guests probably felt the need to ensure that the participants' sense of the event as a happy occasion was not marred.

Summary

Taking as a starting point the conditions laid down by the Roman Catholic Church for the recognition of a marriage as valid, the options open to a couple with respect to the form of their marriage ceremony were outlined. Some evidence was presented which suggested that the option predominantly chosen by intermarried couples was that involving a marriage ceremony before a Catholic priest and after the necessary dispensation had been obtained from the local Roman Catholic bishop. It was pointed out, however, that a variety of processes affected the way couples arrived at a decision on the ceremony. Relevant factors included the bargains which it was possible for couples to strike, the relative power of the Catholic Church, the 'balance of salience' in the relationship, the symbolic aspects of the ceremony, and expedience. In particular, it was suggested that the balance of salience in the relationship - the extent to which one partner could be defined as more religiously involved - might produce an excess of Roman Catholic ceremonies where

there are sex differences in levels of religiosity and where more Roman Catholic women marry out than Catholic men.

Attention was directed to the experiences couples had in obtaining a dispensation in cases where they had decided to be married in a Roman Catholic ceremony. It was suggested that the seeking of a dispensation was conducted within a routinized and bureaucratized context. The strategies adopted by couples to ensure compliance with the bureaucratic procedures of the Roman Catholic Church while denying their significance, applicability or legitimacy, were outlined. The surmise was additionally made that priests might choose to define cases coming before them in ways which rendered them routine and non-problematic from the point of view of the Church bureaucracy. A very limited account was given of some factors associated with the obtaining of a 'dispensation from the canonical form' which allows a Protestant minister to be present in a Roman Catholic marriage ceremony. It was suggested that high status and access to knowledgeable influentials were associated with successful application for a dispensation from the canonical form.

Finally, some comment was made concerning the wedding ceremony itself and the reception. There was some tendency for weddings to be 'quiet affairs'. The extent to which parents, kin and friends participated in the wedding ceremony was assessed and it was concluded that non-attendance at the ceremony was associated with kin distance. The means couples used to ensure congeniality at the service and at the reception afterwards were also briefly discussed.

## Chapter 10 The Reaction of Parents and Others

The point was made earlier that in general terms the social acceptability of Catholic-Protestant intermarriage in Northern Ireland is low. For this reason it is of interest to consider how those relationally linked to an intermarrying pair react when actually confronted by the possibility of a 'mixed' marriage, and to examine the consequences of that reaction for the relationship itself. Curiously, the application and consequences of informal sanctions have received relatively little attention from writers within the labelling tradition in the sociology of deviance. Though a few studies exist on informal reactions to homosexuality (Kitsuse, 1962), pre-marital pregnancy (Briedis, 1975) and cohabitation (Kiser, 1974), labelling theorists have tended in general to restrict their attention to the activities of official control agencies.

Again, relatively little work on the topic exists in the literature on mate-selection. The role of significant others in the validation of courtship relations has been discussed in general terms by Waller (1938) and more recently it has been revived as an issue in the work of Robert Lewis (1973b). Few detailed accounts of the processes involved are available, however, and, apart from Mayer's (1961) work, reactions to specifically interreligious relationships have scarcely been discussed.

### The anticipation of parental reaction.

Most of the individuals in the sample appear to have anticipated at least some negative parental response to their courtship and marriage. The reasons for assuming that this would be the case varied, but, commonly, the expectation itself was taken seriously enough for attempts to be made

at the concealment of the relationship itself, its interreligious nature, or its current status.

In some cases, paternal involvement in the Orange Order or as a church elder was a sufficient reason for Protestant partners to anticipate negative reaction and to conceal the relationship as a result. For others, it was possible for them to infer the likelihood of adverse reaction to the courtship from comments parents had made previously, usually in relation to the political situation in Northern Ireland. Thus, Mrs. Cunningham took her father's fiercely Nationalistic views as a sign that her involvement with a Protestant would not be welcome, while Mrs. Coyle recalled that,

> I had never told them because at that time politics were starting to boil up and I knew from their attitude in 1969 what they would say if they knew I was going out with a Catholic, so I never said.

Most people, though, had rather less to go on and seem to have assumed simply that parental disapproval of an interreligious courtship would be somehow automatic.[1.] Mr. Ferguson, for example, observed that,

> .... this is a very funny thing, because although nothing had ever been instilled into me about going out with Catholics, it was, eh, I found some reason in my mind why I shouldn't tell her (his mother) Angela was a Catholic,

while Mrs. Shaw recalled how,

> I kept it very much from my mother that I was going with a Protestant. When we went home at weekends (from university) which was only about once a month, we didn't bother getting in touch with each other for the couple of days we were at home, and I did very much keep it from my mother because I was afraid that she would be hurt or annoyed by it, you know.

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1. See also the comment by Briedis (1975) that the pre-maritally pregnant teenage girls she interviewed "just knew" that their parents would disapprove of their sexual conduct.

Of course, not every relationship proceeded in complete secrecy. Frequently, though, its exact status would be disguised. From the respondents' comments it would seem to be fairly common for parents in Northern Ireland not to object to their son or daughter 'going out with' someone of another faith "as long as it doesn't get too serious".[1] As a result, one can find Mrs. McLaughlin, for example, holding back from her parents information on the actual character of the relationship:

> When I started going with Eric I didn't tell them. He was coming along to the house and so on and my mother was quite glad to see him because she realized that when he was around I would stop pining for this other bloke (her previous boyfriend) and she liked him and she thought he was a decent wee lad and this sort of thing, but at this stage she didn't envisage that there was anything more serious in it .... I didn't tell her, I told my sister, but I didn't tell my mother that I was going out with him in any serious way, that the friendship phase was over.

In fact, it was only a relatively small number of informants who had not anticipated adverse reaction from parents, and again the reasons for this varied. With some, the nature of their parents' social relations made objections to the courtship unlikely. Mr. Laverty, for instance, pointed out that his father had "wide professional relationships with individuals of the other religion". Mrs. Park's mother had been on the stage and had many Protestant friends in show-business. These experiences, both felt, meant a familiarity with non-co-religionists to the point where an out-marriage in the family held no fears for them.

Other informants pointed to their parents' general lack of strong political or religious beliefs. Mr. Currie's father, it was related, "didn't bother much with the church". Mrs. Sullivan described her father as a "middle-class Protestant, very liberal" while according to Mr. Taylor,

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1. For interclass liaisons see Sussman (1953), for Jewish-Gentile courtships Mayer (1961) and Levinson and Levinson (1958), for Black-White relationships Golden (1958) and for rural Northern Ireland, Harris (1972).

> My mother is English. She only came to Northern Ireland after she was married, so, you see, she doesn't have this in-bred bitterness of the area we live in.

Finally, a lack of parental concern generally was mentioned by two informants as a reason for making concealment unnecessary. As Mr. McLaughlin observed, "my father doesn't really worry about what's going on in the family as long as nobody goes to gaol", and one wife pointed out that her relationship with her father was in any case cool almost to the point of indifference.

Opening the awareness context

Not unexpectedly, given the widespread anticipation of adverse parental reaction among our couples, the telling of parents about the relationship or about the decision to marry was not in many cases accomplished very easily. In some cases steps were taken to mitigate the expected expression of parental disapproval. Occasionally, where parents lived at some distance, they could be made aware of an engagement by letter. In one or two cases, a third party was involved in the disclosure to parents of the intending marriage. The Coyles, for instance, accompanied by the clergyman who was to perform the ceremony, only broke the news of the marriage to Mrs. Coyle's parents the evening before it took place. Two further couples - the Clarks and the Taylors - faced with parental interdicts on the continuance of the relationship even went so far as to elope rather than face their parents' wrath. (Indeed, at the time of the interview, one of these couples had still not told one set of parents that they were now married.)

Most couples, though, had the necessity of establishing an open-awareness context (Glaser and Strauss, 1964) forced upon them simply because the rituals which surround the decision to marry in Western

societies, engagement and spouse-candidate presentation, made it difficult to avoid.[1] Even here, though, respondents mentioned the anxiety of "waiting for the right moment", and temporizing - "I kept putting it off and putting it off" - seems to have been common.[2]

At least three couples, too, had disclosure forced upon them through someone 'spilling the beans'. In one case, apparently, this had happened inadvertently but with two other couples it seems that an element of communal social control was present. Mr. Clark, for instance, blamed a "local busybody" for telling his father about his relationship with a Catholic girl while Mr. Shaw reported that,

> she (his mother) found out. Somebody told her.
> We never found out who. It was amazing.
> Somebody told her and even to this day she
> won't tell us how she found out.

Positive reaction [3]

By and large, those who had not anticipated adverse reaction from parents did not receive any. Perhaps more significant, though, are those couples who had anticipated negative sanctions but who were

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1. By spouse-candidate presentation we mean simply a situation in which the spouse-candidate is physically present when parents are appraised of the intending marriage. (The actual form of the spouse-candidate presentation may vary according to the sex of the spouse-candidate, e.g. where the parents are asked for their daughter's hand by a male suitor). In arranged marriage systems, of course, the suitor is presented by the parents rather than to them.

2. Once again, for a parallel with unmarried pregnant adolescents see Briedis (1975). Lewis's work (1973b) suggests a further point. He found with a sample of American couples that pair dissolution was related to the length of time taken to seek approval for the match. In other words, temporizing may not be entirely functional for the continuance of the relationship.

3. In a number of cases, reaction, while not completely hostile, was nevertheless not entirely favourable either. Further, some respondents were aware of parental disapproval even though this was not expressed in a very explicit manner. However, even this was often better than what had been anticipated and for that reason it is discussed here. As a result the term 'positive reaction' may be thought of as 'non-negative' as well as favourable.

surprised to find that the actual reaction was very much more benign. For some, the expression of parental reproach was left implicit or largely muted. Mrs. Tynan, for example, reported a good deal of discussion within her family "but it never really got heated". Mr. Kearns felt that there had been a measure of parental uneasiness but this was only put to him occasionally by his father remarking from time to time that "there will be problems". In the cases of Mrs. King, Mr. Shaw and Mr. Currie there was some initial hostility which had then very quickly subsided. More striking, though, is Mrs. Beggs' account of how the course of her husband's spouse candidate presentation had gone very differently from what she had expected:

> I was putting it off really. I became anxious at this point, I think this was really the most difficult part from the point of actually telling people we were going to get engaged because I thought my parents will throw me out. I anticipated this. ... but they didn't hit the roof. They sort of listened and said "Oh", sort of quietly and thought about it and said, well first of all said, "We weren't expecting this". ... You know they'd seen a lot of people coming and going and just hadn't yet foreseen me settling down, but they then sort of said, "Well there'll be a lot of problems" etc. but then they got out a bottle of sherry which was a very unusual thing in our houses, and we all had a glass of sherry and they wished us all the best ... and in fact I got a much better reaction from my parents than I ever would have anticipated.

Similarly, although Mrs. Quinn had met and formed a good relationship with her future mother-in-law, Mr. Quinn was surprised by the unflustered way with which his mother received the news of his intending marriage. "But she's a Protestant", he exclaimed. To which his mother's only reply was, "Are you sure she's a Protestant? She's an awfully nice wee girl!"

This last quote suggests that the personal qualities of a spouse-candidate may quite easily in fact override his or her religious background. Indeed, informants usually saw this as being the primary reason why parental disapproval had not in the end appeared. In this context several people stressed the role of shared interests which may have

provided a common and neutral basis on which a relationship between spouse-candidate and parent could proceed. "Her mother and I both liked films, that was the great link in the beginning", said one. Another pointed to he and his future father-in-law having a common interest in music, while for a third the 'link' was a passion for crosswords.

In other cases, it seems, parents took seriously the notion of free mate-choice and individual decision making in mate-selection. Mrs. Warren's father told her, for instance, that "he would see me married in a synagogue if that was what I wanted", and according to Mr. Kearns,

> I was a bit apprehensive about my father's reaction but all he said in actual fact was, he lifted his eyes up from the newspaper that he was reading and said something to the effect that "You're a big fellow now. Do what you think is right".

Similarly, Mrs. Farrell felt that her parents were "very understanding",

> They always have said to all of us that from when we are 18 it's our own life. All of us were raised like that. My mother said that they weren't going to stop us, "so long as you's two is happy, don't worry about what we think".

What seems to have been relatively rare, or at least what may have been rarely communicated to the couples, was the role played by the relative social position of the spouse-candidate. It was only Mrs. Beggs, who as we have seen was startled by her parents' favourable reaction, who accounted for their position in such terms.

> I think there were a lot of things in our favour in that while Catholics have sort of got lots of points against them, a doctor has a lot of points for him and socially to my parents to have their daughter marrying a doctor was a big step up in the world if you like and something they would have wanted.

Finally, it must be noted that one gains the firm impression that a number of Catholic parents were quite prepared to accept a son or

daughter contracting a 'mixed' marriage providing the marriage took place according to the Roman Catholic rules on the matter.

Adverse reaction

A number of couples who had been treated to a positive response from their parents remarked on how "lucky" they had been. For others, though, such good fortune was not to come their way, and some of their experiences are described below. First, we look at the ways in which parents tended to react to their own son or daughter on becoming aware of the proposed marriage. Second, the ways in which parents react to the spouse-candidate are considered, both as this occurs normally and during spouse-candidate presentation. Finally, an outline is given of the content of the various objections raised.

Negative reaction to own son or daughter [1]

Where negative reaction did occur it nearly always took the form of direct, often fairly intense, verbal pressure. Usually, this was applied, too, in a fairly continuous manner. The most extreme example of this sort of sanctioning strategy is probably seen in the case of Mrs. Jamieson, who described in some detail her mother's quite vehement reaction to her proposed marriage:[2]

> ... from getting engaged, when I came in the house it would just be constant fighting. She wasn't going to give me anything to eat. Of course, everything about George or anything she didn't like about him was exaggerated to the full ... She was saying that he was just leading me completely astray. He was interested in nobody

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1. Again it is not always easy to draw a firm line between what is negative reaction and what is not. We have tended to dwell here therefore on cases where the individuals concerned found parental reaction to be rather stressful.

2. It seems matters were exacerbated here by the couple's decision to be married in a Protestant church and by what appears to have been a genuine personal dislike of the spouse-candidate by Mrs. Jamieson's mother.

> but himself, purely selfish and an animal. Everything about the Protestant church and how dirty it was. History became more and more prominent. That was before going out in the evening. When I came back, she'd be sitting up and this sort of talk would continue and she would have hunted out every evening some cuttings out of some paper on how the Protestants were burning down various homes in Belfast. Various historical books she had looked up in the library and taken copies of which she'd leave out for me. I'd open the drawer in my dressing table and I'd find a cutting looking up at me. ... My mother reached such a pitch that she would come into my room at night and put the light on for about half-an-hour, crying and screaming her head off and telling me what a little brat I was and how spoiled I had been and about this animal I was going to marry. Using every sort of cursing language to describe him. If I came in late I was given details of how this terrible person had tricked me and wasn't good enough for me and what a miserable life I would have, and that if I dared marry him I not only would get no money but none of them would go to the marriage and that I would never see my father again. They would never give me any help I would be on my own.

To a certain extent this sort of response was actually atypical in its virulence. Other individuals in the sample did experience, however, reactions having at least a similar form. According to Mr. Courtney, for instance, he and his mother would spend part of each day "having long conversations, going on for hours with tears and everything". Likewise, Mrs. Quinn's stepmother "kept saying things" and Mr. Beggs' mother had "some emotional things to say". With Mrs. Pearson, too, "the issue kept coming up", spiced often with invidious comparisons between her and a cousin who had entered an interracial marriage, "but at least she did better than you, he's a Catholic". Mrs. Daly, to an extent, avoided some of this through being in England during most of the courtsnip. Even so, "there was quite a bit of bitter correspondence back and forth", and when she and her fiancé visited her parents shortly

before the wedding her father did take her aside on occasion in an attempt at dissuasion.

Parental reactions which did not take a direct, verbal or continuous form were less frequent. It happened in a few cases that a parent who had at least acquiesed in the matter was sparked into outright opposition by a particular incident. For example, Mr. Quinn's mother, who as we have seen liked her future daughter-in-law, became upset when the Quinns' application for a dispensation was refused and Mr. Shaw's mother who had accepted her son's prospective marriage after being "pretty aggressive at first", was provoked into renewed opposition because she had been told, mistakenly, that a marriage could not be held in a Roman Catholic church without the Protestant partner converting.

Further, although it is true that a number of parents threatened not to attend their son or daughter's wedding ceremony, when the form of this was not to their liking, no case was found in which a parent expelled a son or daughter from the parental home and only one case - that of Mrs. Cunningham - where a parent withdrew from normal interaction with the intending spouse.[1] In this particular case it was Mrs. Cunningham's father who withdrew, a state of affairs indeed which continued, as she explains, right up to the wedding ceremony.

> Well, my father didn't speak to me for two years. I lived in the same house as my father and we didn't exchange any greetings for two years. The first time he spoke to me was when he met me in the church when we actually got married. He actually wasn't going to come to the wedding until the priest talked him into it. He just said to me when he met me in the church, "You know what I think, but if you're going to go ahead with it, go ahead and may I wish you all the best", which was very embarrassing.

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1. Of course, sometimes, e.g. in the case of Mrs. McLaughlin or Mrs. Jamieson an intending spouse would withdraw from interaction with the parents in situations where this had become too stressful.

Again, in the sample violence or direct commands to discontinue the relationship were not altogether common. There appears to have been one case where a physical assault was involved; one husband related that during the courtship his future wife "had got the occasional hiding".[1] Likewise, in only three cases did parents - or to be more precise fathers - make a direct appeal to their parental authority by forbidding the relationship to continue.

Reaction to the spouse-candidate

The question arises of how parents acted towards the spouse-candidate while they were subjecting their own son or daughter to the sort of pressure we have just described. In fact, it seems to have been a fairly general rule for the spouse-candidate to be treated in what was a comparatively non-hostile way or even in a way sometimes that was at least outwardly friendly.[2] So, Mrs. Beggs could remark on how she had been "made to feel very welcome" by her future mother-in-law even though "I had the feeling that Michael was taken aside at lots of points and had pressure put on him against the whole thing". Mr. Quinn, for his part, found his intended wife's step-mother not unfriendly and was able quite quickly to enter into a joking relationship with her.[3] True, disapproval of the relationship was sometimes conveyed indirectly. Mr. Devlin, for instance, related that his mother "was cool to her (his fiancé) on the phone or if she came up to the house, you know, there

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1. It is possible, of course, that other cases of this sort were concealed.

2. In a few cases there was very little contact between spouse-candidate and future in-laws. The general rule still seems to have held though. As Mrs. Courtney put it. "... the few times I was up at their house the door wasn't shut in my face or anything".

3. This sort of joking relationship seems not to have been common in the sample, although of course anthropologists have pointed to the importance of such relationships. (See, Radcliffe-Brown, 1952).

was no real warmth from my mother towards her". Mr. Tynan, too, could feel that from time to time Mrs. Tynan's mother had "said things to annoy me", while Mr. Pearson took exception to his being introduced to friends of Mrs. Pearson's family as "that Protestant our Mary's going out with". Even so, these seem to have been minor irritations. Mrs. Devlin does not seem to have particularly noticed the coolness. Mr. Tynan seemed generally satisfied with the overall reception he had been accorded, while Mr. Pearson felt that, the introduction episode apart, he had been generally "well received".

There were naturally exceptions to the general rule. In only two cases, though, can one actually find evidence of a spouse-candidate being directly pressured by prospective parents-in-law over a period of time, and in only one of these does the pressure seem to have been fairly intense. Thus, in one of these cases, Mrs. McQuillan could point out merely that,

> There were things that were said to us individually which were never said to us when we were together. ... you know, if I was helping his mother in the kitchen, just washing up or something, I'd get things said to me that probably if Kevin had been there wouldn't have been said.

The other case, though, involved (as perhaps might have been expected) Mr. Jamieson, who in fact turns out to be the only person in the sample to have been both snubbed and cajoled by a prospective parent-in-law. On the one hand, it seems, not only that, as Mrs. Jamieson related,

> ... if he called up to the house at all my mother would just open the door and leave him standing there and would say nothing and I wouldn't know if he was there or not, I'd only know if I'd heard the door-bell,

but also that, as he himself described,

> she (Mrs. Jamieson's mother) phoned me up one evening and she told me about Colette and other men, all this, and she also tried to say that the marriage would have a detrimental effect on her father, that it might drive him to drink and all this sort of thing. In other words she did everything in her power to put me off Colette.

This sort of direct and continuing pressure was exceptional. Slightly more common was the practice adopted by some parents of making use of the spouse-candidate presentation itself to make their opposition to the proposed marriage felt. Thus, a number of the Catholic spouse-candidates in particular found that, whatever their treatment during the rest of the courtship, the non-hostile manner of the prospective parents-in-law disappeared during the spouse-candidate presentation itself. In this situation parents took the opportunity to quiz the couple about issues concerning, say, the form of the ceremony and to register their objections to various Catholic teachings and requirements. So, Mr. Fannin, for example, could speak of a scene in which "all hell broke loose", and in which his future mother-in-law was

> obviously worried about where Ruth was going to be married. She was obviously worried about what was going to happen to the children when they arrived and how they were going to be educated and to what code and so on.

Mr. McLaughlin described his experience as follows:

> I think I said something like, "I'd like to say something". I said, "We'd like to get engaged". Her father didn't quite say "No". He asked me questions about some of the more objectionable beliefs of the Catholic Church and I sold my religion down the river that night. (Q. What sort of specific points did he put to you?) He asked me what school the children would go to. He asked me if I had a chance to save Joan's life or the child's life, and I said Joan's. I told him that I was a nominal Catholic and that I didn't practise and that his fears weren't really justified.

The Fergusons, too, spoke of a "violent argument" while for the Courtneys "it was like the Grand Inquisition".

This sort of development was somewhat unfortunate from the couples' point of view in fact, because, ironically, three of them had deliberately opted for a strategy which made spouse-candidate presentation inevitable. The Fergusons, for instance, in an attempt "to break the ice", as Mr. Ferguson put it, wrote home from holiday to say they had become engaged. This, however, only meant that Mr. Ferguson's parents "met us at the station and their attitude was very cold". For their part, both Mrs. Courtney and Mrs. McLaughlin had decided that they would become engaged 'properly', reasoning, wrongly as it turned out, that this would give their parents fewer grounds for objection. Instead, it seems, they merely left the spouse-candidate in an exposed position.

What is interesting, though, is that in all these cases once the spouse-candidate presentation had taken place the pattern previously described was reinstated. That is, parents would continue to sanction their own son or daughter but would revert to treating the spouse-candidate in a non-hostile manner. This is rather nicely seen, again, in the case of the McLaughlins, for while Mrs. McLaughlin could point out that even after the engagement her parents "were still going hammer and tongs", Mr. McLaughlin could note that

> they never treated me any differently in any way after the engagement had been broached. It was always the same, very polite, mannerly, friendly. I've no complaints whatsoever on that score but on the actual night of the engagement, I remember it coming out, this very strong objection to the Catholic faith.

Rhetorics of dissuasion

In a number of places so far in this chapter it has been possible to see not only something of the processes of negative reaction to an interfaith courtship but also something occasionally of the actual

content of parental objection (e.g. in the case of Mrs. Jamieson's mother or Mrs. McLaughlin's father). In this section that content is explored further by focussing on the specific rhetorics of dissuasion (Strauss, 1954) put forward by parents to discourage their offspring from contracting an interreligious marriage.

Most parents seem to have used a combination of rhetorics, some which were directed at the interreligious nature of the relationship and some which were not. The latter which tended to be offered by both Catholic and Protestant parents alike were especially varied and tended to be concerned with a variety of additional circumstances which in the parents' view rendered the proposed marriage inadvisable. Some parents, for instance, attempted to discredit the grounds on which the decision to marry had been made. Mrs. Jamieson was told that she "had been spoiled too much as a child" and that now she simply wanted to get her own way as she had when she had been younger. Mrs. McLaughlin's mother told her to "forget all this silly nonsense". Some couples, like the Fergusons, were told that they were too young or that they didn't have enough money, while in some cases appeals were made to the suffering that was being inflicted on the parents by their offspring's action. Mr. Courtney, for instance, describes how both his parents used this argument,

> She (his mother) would always start off with "Do you know what you're letting yourself in for?" And then she would put the boot in. "Do you know what you're doing to your father?" She would always start off with what I was doing to myself and it would always end up with what I was doing to them. Daddy would come in and say, "Look at your mother, look at the state you've put her in". He would say, "Do you want to be the cause of putting Mummy in the hospital?".

In a further case, as Mr. Beggs related, an apparently similar kind of emotional leverage could be used,

> My father died nine years ago and suddenly she (his mother) would say, "I don't know what your father would think today. I don't think you're your father's son at all" ... But she always brought in the emotional thing with a reference to my father whom she knew I respected, you know.

It was more generally the case, though, that the rhetorics focussed directly on the interreligious nature of the relationship and more specifically on the likely lot of anyone foolhardy enough to enter a 'mixed' marriage. Usually (and perhaps predictably) the observation would be made that "there would be difficulties" in the marriage. Whenever this was mentioned in an interview an attempt was made to get the couple to recall what particular difficulties had been mentioned. Below can be seen a selection of such observations offered by Protestant parents:

> My father had this sort of Protestant view of Catholics wherein the priest gets hold of one's name and then hounds you to have children hereafter, and to go to mass twice on Sunday, and do this, that and the other. He imagined that this would be the sort of life we would lead. He came out with this very sort of emotional argument that he had thought that I was the sort of person who had ideas of my own and so on, and now I was ready to lay me down as a doormat to somebody, because once you got anywhere near the influence of a Catholic the priest would have complete control.

> They'd say things about the Catholic Church's attitude to birth control and things like this, and having the priest breathing down your neck every second asking why your wife wasn't pregnant when you've only been ten months married and they had terrible visions of us swarming with kids by the time we were 22 or 23.

> I got things like "you'll find out soon enough, the Catholic Church will suck you in". They didn't believe I could be married in a Catholic Church without having to become a Catholic.

> I got a few lectures about how I would be expected to convert to Catholicism, "once they got their hands on you, you were sunk", that they'd make you become a Catholic, the evils of Catholicism, you know, the priest on your neck all the time.

> Priests round at the door. Kids every other year and the kids would have to be brought up as Catholics. There was no freedom at all, you'd be dominated.
>
> Well, they thought that anyone who married a Catholic had to change and the children had to change, it never happened the other way. ... They weren't so strong about the priest, but they thought that if you were married Catholic priests will always be hounding you for money, and the children will be taken into the Catholic Church.
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> My mother said, "That a son of mine could marry a Catholic; they'll give you no peace".

In other words, in the eyes of these Protestant parents there were three basic 'difficulties' which flowed from marriage to a Catholic: the Protestant partner, together with his or her children, would be absorbed into Catholicism, would be controlled by it in the person of the priest, and would be overburdened with children as a result. It was only Mrs. Daly's father, on the Protestant side, who seemed to be directly concerned with safe-guarding specifically religious values per se for he told his daughter that she was "betray(ing) my Presbyterian birthright" and that, "his forefathers had died on the hills of Scotland for this, and here I was selling myself out to a Papist".

It appears rather that a rhetoric of this sort was more characteristically a Catholic one. True, we have seen Mrs. Jamieson's mother speaking of her proposed son-in-law as an "animal" and castigating Protestants in general for their behaviour and Mr. Courtney was able to point out that

> ... to my mother, a Protestant to her, she can't define it. They're not quite right and she'll use the expression "They're a queer crowd". "You don't want to get in tow with that lot, because you don't know what you're getting yourself involved in".

However, it seems to have been generally the case that Catholic parents were worried more specifically by the dangers to faith inherent, on their view, in a 'mixed' marriage. So, Mrs. Jamieson's mother was also concerned, as has been seen, about her daughter being "led astray", and Mr. Courtney could also point out that an important factor in his mother's objection was that "she felt that my faith wouldn't survive a marriage to a Protestant". Similarly, Mr. Devlin remarked that "this was the whole thing, you'll lose your faith", while Mrs. Cunningham heard through her mother how her father felt about the proposed marriage:

> He didn't blame me for going out with a non-Catholic, he blamed me for letting it get to the stage of marriage. Mixed marriages caused more trouble than they were worth, that you start losing the faith. As regards children he would say that they (Protestants) would agree to anything but when it actually comes to it, they are never particularly willing.

Rhetorics of dissuasion directed at the interreligious nature of the proposed marriage thus vary systematically according to the religion of the parents.[1]

Coping with negative reaction

The primary resource used by couples to cope with negative parental reaction derived from the techniques for moral disassociation which they had already established in their relationships.

It is possible to see Mrs. Daly acknowledging therefore that her father could hold the views that he did by saying that,

> I can understand it (his objecting) because he's a product of his environment. He can remember the previous troubles and I suppose these things affect you...,

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1. Given the nature of the sample and the reliance on second-hand accounts it is difficult to make any clear judgements as to whether there was also systematic variation by social class or parental religiosity.

but at the same time still stressing her own right to make her own decisions over the choice of a mate by making it clear to him that,

> Tom was the person I wanted to marry and it was just a shame that he was a Catholic but that was it.

It is interesting, too, to note how Mr. Beggs with his strong ecumenical orientation could respond to his mother's somewhat negative reaction to the proposed marriage by stressing the developing ecumenical thinking on intermarriage. As he puts it,

> ... we were able to point out that our values with regard to matrimony are to do with the marriage of Christians. This raises problems. Would one be more respectable to marry someone with no Christian beliefs which would not raise then the diplomatic problems of inter-church marriage but would leave out the Christian dimension from marriage? What's more important in other words your allegiance to your sect or the realization of the importance of Christianity in marriage? So, my mother, I think found herself out on a limb in the end.

Couples also used however a number of more varied interactional techniques which permitted them to deal situationally with adverse reaction by parents. Some of these have been pointed to already in this chapter: the care some couples took, for instance, to become engaged 'properly', by withdrawing physically when pressure became too intense, or even, as we saw in two cases, by eloping. Clearly, the first of these strategies had for the partners something of the nature of a 'pre-emptive strike' in that the intention was to 'stage-manage' the spouse-candidate presentation in such a way as to leave parents with very little room for manoeuvre.[1] Or as Mrs. Courtney, with some regard for the symbolism of the occasion put it,

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1. Indeed, Mrs. McLaughlin even spoke of having to "plan it (the engagement) like a military campaign".

> ... we had to have a ring. I knew if we went to my parents without a ring they would then say, "Maybe you shouldn't get engaged, wait". But if we went home with a ring it made it so much easier, you know, to say, "we are engaged", and we'd have the symbol in front of us and there'd be nothing they could do about it. So, that's why it was essential to us. I'm not the sort of person who just wanted to flash an engagement ring. I wanted it to confirm that we'd gotten engaged properly.

In the two cases of elopement, the couples involved had been relatively young at the time the courtship began, and there had been (as in the case of the Coyle's near-elopement) a parental ban on the relationship continuing. Couples therefore faced the additional prospect of telling parents not only that they were contemplating a 'mixed' marriage but also that the previous injunction had been deliberately disobeyed. It seems to have been this, which hardly admits the possibility of coping with parental reaction in the normal sense, which tended very largely to have encouraged the couples towards elopement.

As indicated earlier two individuals - Mrs. McLaughlin and Mrs. Jamieson - temporarily withdrew from interaction with their parents when sanctioning became too intense.[1] Mrs. McLaughlin, for example, went to stay for a time with her married sister when, despite being 'properly done', the spouse-candidate presentation had produced a great deal more negative reaction than she had anticipated. Mrs. Jamieson also seems to have fairly clearly withdrawn from contact with her parents, though without moving completely from the parental home. Instead, she merely worked long hours to avoid being at home in the evening and spent many of her weekends at Mr. Jamieson's home.

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1. This sort of response, of course, depends to a certain extent on having an alternative place to go. One should also point out that some informants like Mr. McQuillan were not living at home in any case and in that sense were able to 'escape' a great deal of parental displeasure.

These three rather disparate routines for coping with negative reaction from parents by no means exhaust the range of those actually available to couples. Below are mentioned briefly some of the others.[1] Mr. Ferguson, for instance, was able simply to ignore for the most part what was said to him in the wake of the spouse-candidate presentation:

> My father every now and again would bring the subject up and of course at the mention of this I just locked off and let him rave on. I would just shut him out because I was convinced that what I wanted to do was right.

Beyond this, other partners found the means to argue back at their parents. Sometimes, especially where a parent had made some use of cautionary tales, this could be done quite simply by counter-assertion. So, for instance, Mrs. Cunningham could report that when her father tried to back up his assertion that "mixed marriages were more trouble than they were worth" by "quoting all the cases of mixed marriages he knew that hadn't worked", her mother would "pick up other examples and how they had worked".[2] In other cases, a fairly common tactic was for the motivation behind the parents' objection to be questioned in such a way as to devalue it. Parents, therefore, were sometimes charged with hypocrisy by being asked why the question of religion had suddenly become so important to them when they didn't go to church themselves. Or, it could be suggested, that they were simply worried about what the neighbours might think. (In a few cases, too, parents were characterized a "neurotic" although here the charge was not addressed to them directly, but seemed to stand as a means of accounting for the negative reaction itself and of assuring the couple that it had, in fact, no serious basis.)

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1. One reason for the multiplication of coping routines was that they were used both singly and in combination.

2. This seems to be the only example in the sample of one parent siding with the couple against the other parent.

Non-parental reaction

Parents, of course, are not the only people who might find themselves reacting to an interreligious courtship or to a proposed 'mixed' marriage. Other siblings, close and far kin, friends, neighbours, acquaintances and in the Northern Irish situation members of para-military or secret organizations feel called upon to make a response, positive or negative.[1]

Siblings and other kin

Those in the sample who had siblings seem on the whole to have found them supportive. Certainly there does not appear to be any case of a brother or sister objecting to a proposed interfaith marriage when the parents had given their blessing to it. Similarly, while there are a few exceptions, in those cases where parents did react negatively sibling solidarity seems to have been an important sustaining factor for the individual attempting to reach marriage. Mrs. McLaughlin, as noted, stayed with her sister when the situation at home became particularly fraught and Mrs. Daly, too, found her sister to be a valuable source of emotional support. An instance of sibling support not connected with parental disapproval is also seen in the case of a couple who used to meet at a brother's flat in a 'safe' part of Belfast when the situation made it too difficult for them to visit in each other's houses. Additionally, some siblings had been indirectly helpful in that they had prepared the way, as it were, by marrying out themselves.

In Mr. Beggs' case siblings were also useful though in a much more direct way. Both of his elder brothers are in fact priests and like him deeply interested in the development of ecumenism. Therefore, according to Mr. Beggs,

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1. It is necessary again to point out that one is relying here on the accounts couples gave of the motives and activities of others; accounts which were in some cases themselves obtained at second hand.

> They were very helpful. I don't think they hindered in any way. Being liberalizing influences, I think, themselves, they couldn't conscientiously raise objections and be consistent with themselves. You know, they're for a developing ecumenism and they couldn't just flinch from this problem because it happened to hit our family. So they set to and converted my mother.

Furthermore, it seems, Mr. Begg's younger brother made very little comment but "watched to see which way the wind was blowing" before joining the pro-marriage forces.

Only two cases were found in which siblings did side with parents rather than with the intermarrying couple. In one of these - that of Mrs. Fannin - her brother's opposition seems to have surfaced quite early on and to have been rather deep-seated. In part, this was apparently the result of his being a fairly active Orangeman. Additionally, however, it seems that his sibling role was in any case far from clear-cut since he had taken over as head of the household on the death of his father. At any rate as far as one can judge his part in the sanctioning process more nearly resembled that of some of the fathers we have already mentioned rather than any of the siblings. The other case in which siblings were hostile was that of the Jamiesons, though in this case hostility seems only to have crystallized as time went on. Indeed, it seems that Mrs. Jamieson's brothers and sisters were actually "reasonably friendly" towards Mr. Jamieson in the initial stages of the relationship, an added factor in this being, apparently, that one other sister had a boyfriend who was also a Protestant. However, as it became clear that the Jamiesons were thinking seriously about marriage and moreover that they seemed set on having the service performed in a Protestant church, the situation deteriorated. At this point, the rest of the family increasingly aligned themselves with Mrs. Jamieson's mother,

though even so , there seems to have been some variation in the attitude of individual siblings. True, Mrs. Jamieson's younger brother, according to Mr. Jamieson, "tore the (wedding) invitation up in her face and threw it at her" and a sister roundly sanctioned her own husband when he tried to offer the couple some support. (Another and more indirect attempt by another sister is described later). There was, though, at least one attempt at mediation by a sister who tried to encourage Mr. Jamieson to accept the idea of a 'joint' ceremony [1] and the couple themselves did try to enlist the aid of Mrs. Jamieson's elder brother. This last, and as it happened unsuccessful attempt, is in itself interesting because, as the following account by Mr. Jamieson indicates, the brother in question was not entirely unfriendly, - at least in private.

> We'd hoped her elder brother would have been the best man and we went out to his home with the idea of asking him. In fact, when he was there on his own, he treated us reasonably well, talked it over and he seemed to indicate that he could not possibly be the best man and when his wife happened to come in, who is a very strong Roman Catholic, practically kicked us out, which we weren't very pleased with.

Unlike siblings, other kin were very rarely drawn directly into the discussion between parents and the potential spouse(s). Thus, the experience of Mrs. McLaughlin's uncle who became embroiled in the discussion engendered by the spouse-candidate presentation was atypical. (Indeed, this merely occurred, apparently, because he happened to call while the discussion was still going on). Similarly atypical, was the intervention of Mrs. Ferguson's grandmother who sided with the couple

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1. This was unsuccessful partly because of the Catholic regulation in the matter and partly because Mr. Jamieson himself appears not to have been very keen on the idea.

in a decidedly forceful way.

> She would laugh in their (Mr. Ferguson's parents') faces... "Did you ever hear such nonsense", she'd say. That sort of thing. She ridiculed their arguments, you know, making everything seem very silly.

In this case, though, it was the tenor of her remarks as much as the nature of her intervention which was unusual, since in general wider kin proved themselves to be less well-disposed than siblings to the possibility of a 'mixed' marriage.

The particular strategy such kin adopted for expressing their disapproval seemed to vary according to their distance (geographical and/or geneological) from the couple. Those kin who were relatively close in both these senses seemed to have preferred attempts at 'backstage' activity (Goffman 1958: cpts.III) in the form of private discussions directed at the parents themselves. Mrs. Laverty's aunt, for instance, "put a lot of pressure on my mother" and Mrs. Sullivan was quite sure that her uncle, a Presbyterian minister, had expressed a good deal of disapproval. Presumably in these cases kin preferred not to make a direct approach to the couple for fear that it might be interpreted as an attempt to usurp parental authority. How far though their opinions were actually invited in some way by the parents or were simply offered gratuitously is impossible to say with the data to hand. Neither is it clear how far interventions such as these may have served to spark off or stiffen the resolve of those who opposed the impending marriage. They do not appear, though, to have had any effect in situations where parental reaction was in itself favourable. Certainly, in the two cases just mentioned the efforts of Mrs. Laverty's aunt and Mrs. Sullivan's uncle do not seem to have been rewarded, and in one further case at least an

intervention by kin was strikingly repulsed. In this particular case, which involved the Quinns, Mr. Quinn recalled how two of his aunts - both of whom he described rather scornfully as "real, old-fashioned Catholics, a pair of altar-rail lickers" - tried to pressure his mother only to have this pressure dramatically revealed and thereby neutralized. As he described it,

> Joyce was up at our house and she was having something to eat and my two aunts were in the kitchen and they thought that we shouldn't be applying for this dispensation and they thought Joyce should become a Catholic and so my mother pushed them through the door into the room Joyce was in and she said, "Say it to her, don't say it behind her back!" and of course they didn't know what to do with themselves!

Kin who were rather more distant tended, as in Firth's (1969, 361) study in London, to express their disapproval of the proposed marriage through a symbolic gesture. At least it seemed to be mentioned fairly frequently by couples that aunts and cousins and so on often whom they hadn't seen for some years had refused to attend the ceremony and to send a wedding gift.[1]

Again, however, this sort of strategy appears not to have been very effective presumably because the kin <u>were</u> themselves more or less distant, so their opinion would be less salient to those getting married or their parents and, of course, the gesture itself inevitably came too late to affect the course of events.

<u>Friends and neighbours</u>

Moving beyond the kin group one finds that, for the most part, the couple's friends, like their siblings, were supportive while neighbours, like distant kin, often chose to display their antagonism. In many cases it was not altogether unexpected that friends should be favourably

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1. In terms of the symbolic value of presents one wife was quick to note that although a relative who was an Orangeman did send a wedding present, "it wasn't up to the quality of the others".

disposed. Given the nature of the sample, there were frequent instances in which the partners and their friends had gone through university together. Indeed, not infrequently, the courtship relationship had actually grown out of interaction in a wider friendship group. So, it would seem there was little reason for relations between the couple and those around them to become negatively toned.

Friends, it seems, were often aware of what was going on in cases where couples were having to face adverse reaction from parents. Indeed, not surprisingly, again given the nature of the sample, this awareness was for some people underlined by the fact that they themselves were undergoing something similar. The Courtneys, for instance, knew the Fergusons and so "it helped to know that they were going through the same thing" and Mrs. Jamieson seems to have found some solace in a friend at work whose parents were opposed to her marrying a Catholic.

It generally seems to have been the case, however, that friends were not called on for active support in the way that siblings were. Instead, their main usefulness to the couple seems to have been their symbolic value in standing by them and particularly in their being prepared to attend the wedding service wherever it might be. Certainly, this was something that was remarked upon favourably by people like Mr. Courtney and Mr. Cunningham whose parents had not attended the wedding. (Mr. Kearns, too expressed his gratification at a friend defying his (the friend's) mother by attending the wedding).

At the same time, friends who were unhappy about a proposed 'mixed' marriage seem to have felt, unlike relatives, that they had a licence to speak their minds.

One of Mr. Wilson's friends for example was described as feeling that "he had a mission to warn me of the pitfalls". In the other cases, though,

objections were seen, at least in the minds of respondents, to have been prompted by ulterior considerations. This is most clear in the case of Mr. Tynan. During most of his courtship, Mr. Tynan worked as a semi-professional musician and it seems that most of his fellow band members were fairly vociferous in their opposition to his relationship. For the most part, they seem to have voiced their opposition by telling him that "it would never work out". Mr. Tynan, though, was sure that a more fundamental reason was their fear that a Catholic travelling round with the band, as Mrs. Tynan sometimes did, could have unfortunate repercussions in certain venues. As a result, Mr. Tynan had to choose between the band and his fiancée (which he did in favour of the latter).

Mr. King also noted how the context in which his friends were placed affected their perception of his relationship. Nearly all of his friends were Protestants who lived in the Republic of Ireland. Most of them, he felt, were "appallingly misinformed" and "no help at all", something he put down almost entirely to the fact that

> ..in the South mixed marriages are seen as a great tragedy because they help in the decline of the Protestant population down there.

On the Catholic side we can see something of the same happening. The Parks, for example, came under some attack on one particular occasion from a Catholic friend of theirs. The attack itself, though, was short-lived and seems to have been prompted in their view by the friend, who later apologised, having been caught up in some severe rioting.[1] We can also come back in another and somewhat unusual case to Mrs. Jamieson who, it seems, was pressured at the instigation of one of her sisters, by telephone calls from a number of friends. As she puts it,

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1. Interestingly in this particular instance the couple were defended by the other people present.

> My sister began contacting her school friends and I'd be getting these phone-calls at work, you know, "You really are being silly, I knew a Mrs. So-and-so who did the same thing and they suffered for it years later, and it's not worth it; why don't you just, you know, come out with me one evening and go to a dance or something?

Finally, only Mrs. Ferguson, it would appear, was faced with any sort of generalized disapproval, something she found expressed by a number of her school-friends;

> The other girls were horrified that I was going out with a Protestant. It's amazing now to think of it but they genuinely were horrified and they used to make veiled references to Protestants all the time.

As hinted earlier neighbours and acquaintances were rather less likely than friends to appear well-disposed towards a mixed-faith relationship. Some even seem to have taken it upon themselves to 'spill the beans' about a relationship which had been proceeding in secret. For the most part, however, use was made of snubs or neighbours would express their disapproval rather mutedly or through the sorts of veiled references endured by Mrs. Ferguson. Mrs. McQuillan, for instance, found that the verger of her church "wouldn't acknowledge me on the street", while Mr. Coyle was snubbed by the local grocer, "a strong Republican". Similarly one husband, a teacher, was fairly sure that "some of the older staff at school weren't happy about it", although no one had said anything openly. Interestingly, parents were also likely to find this sort of thing happening. For example Mr. Kearns reported with some amusement that "the Sunday School tea-lady refused to say 'Good afternoon'" to his parents while Mrs. Courtney could point out that

> A few other women in the street started to bring Catholics into the conversation where Catholics hadn't been brought into it before, and it was always bad things.

Furthermore, as Mr. Beggs discovered through his brother, people who met his mother out shopping were actually commiserating with her by saying things like "I'm sorry to hear about your trouble" or "You can't be responsible for what your children do".

As with kin, attempts at social control by neighbours seem not to have deterred couples at all. Partly, one presumes, because the sanctioning methods they did employ were such as to be little more than irritants anyway and partly because there seems to have been no respect in which their opinions were actually regarded as being salient. Indeed given the rather dismissive way neighbours were often talked about, they may simply have been regarded as playing their 'normal' and rather petty role.

It is also noteworthy that, again like kin, neighbours seem to have had little effect on parents whatever their own views of the impending marriage might have been. Further, while kin may have been sensitive to the proprieties of the situation by, for example, not expressing their feelings directly to the couple for fear of usurping parental authority, neighbours and others seem not to have been so careful, and to have spoken 'out of turn'. As a result the relationship between parents and some of their friends could be attenuated because of some particular remark made, even though the parents in question may not themselves have been happy about the marriage. Mrs. Courtney, for instance, reported that her mother's relationship with a friend had become strained after a somewhat anxious incident in which she (the mother) was described as a "conspirator" presumably because of the impending marriage. Similarly Mrs. Beggs related that,

> ... when we got engaged, I can remember one couple my parents were visiting, friends of theirs for about 20 years, and the man of the house sort of saying, you know, "Catholics aren't Christians, your daughter isn't a Christian if she's marrying a Catholic". This was the most awful thing you could say to my father, that his daughter wasn't a Christian and instead of agreeing with this he found himself in a new position. You know, whereas before he might have criticized Catholics, to have his daughter criticized, he found himself defending Catholics and his daughter together.

A measure of the inappropriateness of the remarks made can possibly be judged by the fact that Mrs. Beggs' father could reportedly say on breaking off relations with these long-time friends, "I'm glad we found out about them".

Only in two cases did parents or siblings actually seek to involve outsiders in the sanctioning enterprise. One instance was the attempt of one of Mrs. Jamieson's sisters to enlist the aid of some of her friends to bring extra pressure to bear on Mrs. Jamieson. This was not the only effort made though, for Mrs. Jamieson's mother also tried to involve a priest and Mrs. Jamieson's former boyfriend in attempts at dissuasion. (Mrs. Jamieson, though, simply refused to meet either of them).

In the other case, the attempt was much less sustained with Mrs. McLaughlin's mother trying merely to shame her daughter by retorting to congratulations offered on Mrs. McLaughlin's graduation day with the words, "Yes, but what she gives with one hand, she takes with the other". Again, however, the inappropriateness of outsiders having a way in the matter was deeply resented, though, this time by the partners themselves. Mrs. McLaughlin for example recounted the graduation incident in a highly indignant tone and Mrs. Jamieson described the phone-calls from her sister's friends especially as being "so disgusting".

Intimidation

Left to neighbours and friends of parents, attempts at exercising communal social control over inter-marrying couples appear to be rather ineffectual. When, however, other guardians of sectional morality and solidarity become involved the methods used can be rather more forceful. At its most gruesome this can be seen in those cases in Northern Ireland where a romantic liaison with someone of a different faith has led so far as assassination.

Dillon and Lehane (1973), in fact, detail six assassinations in Northern Ireland between 1971 and mid-1973 which have involved 'mixed' relationships of a romantic nature.[1] These cases, however, must surely represent the tip of the ice-berg as far as a general pattern of intimidation is concerned. (For a general picture of forced population movement especially in Belfast, see Darby and Morris, 1974).

Four of the couples in the sample had actually experienced threats of one kind or another during courtship. (None, though, had suffered in this way after marriage though nearly all of them were concerned about the possibility). Material from each of these cases is presented below, although, in fact, it is difficult to draw conclusions from it. This is because, once again, but particularly so in cases of this nature one knows very little about the motivations and circumstances leading up to the sanctioning attempt itself. Information helpful to an understanding of intimidation is, however, sparse enough (with the exception of the Darby and Morris study already mentioned) to warrant some further description.

In the first case, it seems as if the couple were in fact taken to be already married and both Catholic. They had both spent some time at a house in a Protestant area of Belfast which the female partner was looking after

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1. These six do not include killings in which the victim was a partner in an already established 'mixed' marriage or where he or she was a convert.

while the owners were away. During this period, however, they received an anonymous letter which told them that "You and your Fenian wife better get out of Belfast quick". It seems, though, that following this their religious heterogeneity may actually have saved them further harassment. The couple were told that strangers, presumably intending intimidators, had made enquiries in the street about the "Catholics" living in the house in question. Since, however, it appears that the neighbours round about were aware that the female partner at least attended services in a local Protestant church, they were able to assure the enquirers that the couple were not Catholic after all.[1] In any event, this couple were married soon after and moved to another part of the city altogether thus avoiding the possibility of further harassment.

Anonymous letters were also sent in two further cases. One of these according to its recipient contained a message to the effect that "if I was seen in the area again I would be shot". The other bore the words, "Stop associating with Catholics or you won't be associating with them much longer". In both cases, no more threats were made after the letters were taken to the authorities. In fact, this was something which prompted one of the partners to speculate that the threats themselves may have come from within his future wife's family as the taking of the letters to the security forces was not widely known to anyone else. There is no proof for this, of course, and if it were true it represents the only example in the sample of someone within the family unhappy about a proposed marriage trying to turn the wider situation in Northern Ireland to their advantage. In the other case the partners again moved away shortly afterwards anyway so preventing any further act from their would-be assailants.

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1. This underlies a point made elsewhere - that in Northern Ireland couples are assumed to be religiously homogamous unless there is direct evidence to the contrary.

Finally in the last of the four cases the evidence of intimidation is much less clear although the couple certainly felt themselves to have been threatened. In this case, shots were fired across the front of the car in which the couple were driving to the female partner's home. The couple were not at all sure, however, whether the shots were actually aimed at them and missed, whether they were fired in front of the car as a warning or whether, simply, they had been caught in a cross-fire. As a result of the experience, though, they decided "to take no more chances" and to meet thereafter at a 'safe' location elsewhere in the city.

As implied earlier, intimidation is a somewhat difficult area to discuss because one knows so little about its perpetrators. It is perhaps, though, worth making two comments. Firstly, the picture which emerged earlier pointing to the fact that reactions to a proposed 'mixed' marriage are often relatively benign is not altogether undermined by the possibility that couples may be exposed to threats of violence from an anonymous source. Each of the cases presented above took place after the current 'troubles' in Northern Ireland began. There does not appear to be evidence either in the ethnographic literature or in either the studies by Dillon and Lehane (1973) or by Darby and Morris (1974) which suggests that violence is routinely used against out-marrying individuals other than at times when communal tension is already high.[1]

Secondly, the evidence presented on intimidation touches on a topic already alluded to - the existence of sexual mythologies in Northern Ireland, comparable to those found in some racial situations.

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1. There is though the instance noted by Dillon and Lehane (p.79) of a Catholic receiving a beating as the result of an affair with a Protestant woman.

The three warning notes we have described all seem to have come from Protestant sources. Even given that in one case a mistake may well have been made and the recipients both regarded as Catholics, there seems to be no evidence that the relationships in question were seen in any sense as being acts of sexual aggression or aggrandisement with a woman of the dominant group.[1] Similarly, while Dillon and Lehane (1973) were able to point to cases of assassination where the victim had been tortured and/or mutilated there appear to be no parallels at all in Northern Ireland with the indignities inflicted on Blacks in the course of lynchings in the Southern United States even in this century. Intimidation and assassination in Northern Ireland, it seems, have much more of a territorial or 'security' component than any sort of punitive sexual motivation.

Discussion

To recapitulate, a number of patterns have been observed in relation to the way in which parents and others reacted to the prospect of a Catholic-Protestant marriage. First of all, the expectations couples had concerning the way in which their parents would react were with some frequency unfulfilled. Parental reaction was often in the event unexpectedly benign, though where, in a few cases, attempts were made actually to engineer a positive response these were unsuccessful. Where there was negative reaction it rarely extended to more extreme forms of sanctioning such as withdrawal or openly coercive responses. Furthermore, while parents would extend negative sanctions to their own son or daughter treatment of spouse-candidates remained for the most part mild. Within the family context siblings were generally supportive of the prospective spouses, while outside the family open disapproval of the match was more

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1. See Harris (1971, 171). Harris appears to suggest that the absence of sexual mythologies of this kind proves that Catholics are not generally exploited by Protestants in Northern Ireland. It seems clear, though, that the belief that Catholics are promiscuous would undermine a major Protestant stereotype - that Catholics are rigidly controlled by their priests. It might then become difficult to justify anti-Catholic discrimination based on the notion of their being 'priest-ridden'.

likely to be expressed by those standing in a more distant relationship to the marrying pair. Rhetorics of dissuasion directed by parents at the interreligious character of the relationship varied systematically depending on whether the parents concerned were Protestant or Catholic.

The degree to which the parents described here received with calmness news of an intending out-marriage by their son or daughter is noteworthy given evidence that in general terms the social acceptability of religious intermarriage in Northern Ireland is low, and the savagery which the conflict there has sometimes produced. It is of course true that the accounts of parental reaction seen above have been given by individuals who by definition were not deterred from entry into an interreligious marriage. It may be that more typically couples intending to enter a 'mixed' marriage in Northern Ireland are faced with reactions from parents and others which are rather more severe and rather more effective than those seen in the present sample. At the same time the patterns described in the present study are consistent with the findings of other studies showing that informal reactions to deviant activity may often take a relatively tolerant form. Kitsuse (1962) found in a study of reactions to homosexuality, for example, that,

> while reactions towards a person defined as homosexual tend to be negatively toned, they are far from homogeneous as to the forms and intensity of the sanctions invoked and applied,

and he goes on,

> .... in view of the extreme negative sanctions against homosexuality which are posited on theoretical grounds, the generally mild reactions to out subjects are startling.

Closer to the present field of study, perhaps, Rains (1971) and Briedis (1975) in studies of pre-maritally pregnant adolescents and Kiser (1974) in a study of cohabiting college students all point to how their informants -

like those in the present sample - attempted to conceal their activities on the assumption that they would be subject to strong parental disapproval, only to find, typically, that when concealment no longer became possible parental reaction was much less severe than had been expected.

There are a number of reasons why this should be so. First of all, as Briedis (1975, 492) points out,

> When deviants come to unofficial attention, they force a shift from the expression of general moral preferences to specific treatment. Discovery modifies and clarifies the reaction process itself.

Echoing an observation made by Becker (1963) in a slightly different context, the point Briedis is making here is that abstract moral values by virtue of their generality and frequently mutually contradictory character cannot be applied unproblematically to specific situations. Rather the situation itself requires a decision by those who confront it concerning those elements which are to be made the basis for its definition. One important feature of bureaucratized social control agencies is that they routinize the definitional process to permit the categorization of 'normal crimes' (Sudnow, 1965) i.e. sets of consensual understandings about the characteristic features of deviant acts which form a basis for their disposition. In less formal settings such understandings do not exist and cannot be made the basis for the accurate prediction of response. In the present sample, therefore, though some individuals possessed evidence concerning the predelictions of parents in relation to cross-boundary relationships, most did not. They could only premise their anticipation of how their decision to marry would be received on a perception that religious intermarriage was in general socially unacceptable, only to find themselves being taken aback when parents chose to define the situation by reference to free mate-choice, the particular

characteristics of the spouse-candidate or conformity to Catholic stipulations concerning the ceremony. In other cases attempts to manipulate the situation failed when the couple unwittingly presented their parents with a situation they defined as permitting them to set aside the normal proprieties surrounding intergroup contact and treat the spouse-candidate to a hostile interrogation.

Discovery additionally modifies and clarifies reaction by its impact on the relational context within which the reaction itself takes place. The labelling tradition has focussed on the extent to which the reaction engendered by deviant activity is consequentially problematic for its perpetrator. It has been rather less concerned with the degree to which reaction may be consequentially problematic for the reactor. Since labelling theorists have normally dealt with the application of social control by official agencies and within formalized control settings this is not surprising. These are contexts in which predominantly the role-relationship between reactor and reactee is a specific one. Moreover, to the extent that social control in a bureaucratized setting frequently involves the processing of the perceived deviant through stages of 'treatment', the deviator-reactor relationship has in many instances in fact a transitory character.

Role-relationships which are specific and transitory are, of course, unlikely to be characteristic of informal settings and are certainly not to be found within the family. In these contexts offenders remain potentially available and have rights and obligations in areas which extend beyond their deviant activity. Deviators in this context are therefore, as far as those who react to them are concerned, a continuing possible source of what Eidheim (1969) calls future role dilemmas. That is, a problem for those in the relationship becomes one of how far a breach occurring within one context may legitimately be carried over into another.

Although without direct access to the parents themselves the suggestion must remain speculative, it can be argued that the basis both for the absence of more severe sanctions and the sanctioning role of neighbours and more distant kin lies in the circumstances just outlined. Those who stand in a less close relation to the couple put less in jeopardy by their reaction than those who are relationally close. On the other hand, reactors whose relationship with someone defined as deviant is a particularistic one must assess the consequences of their reactions for other desired goals which they may have, the maintenance of the family unit, for example, or intergenerational continuity. This may lead to what one might almost see as a lay version of the secondary deviation thesis, the recognition that treatment drives the offender further into deviance. Possibly, therefore, parents judged that sanctioning methods - physical force, direct command and so on - which were potentially alienating, or which might precipitate hasty action by the son or daughter, might not actually serve the end they sought but instead play into the hands of the spouse-candidate. (Given what happened in the case of the Taylors and the Clarks where parental bans drove the relationship underground rather than causing it to cease, this may indeed be a reasonable surmise).

A further factor encouraging sanctioning techniques which do not lead to a direct rupturing of the relationship between parents and offspring may be the structure of the parental family itself. Fathers seemingly were most active in the sanctioning of a son or daughter either as authority figures or where certain roles outside the family, e.g. as an Orangeman, were threatened by the proposed marriage. More usually the major sanctioning figure appeared to be the mother who given the extent of conjugal role-segregation in Northern Ireland (Easthope, 1976), is likely particularly

in the older generation to fulfil the kind of integrative-expressive role within the nuclear family described by Parsons and Bales (1955). Such a role one would suspect is not altogether consistent with the use of coercive sanctioning techniques.

Where parents, for whatever reason, have recourse to persuasive measures then it is likely that their sanctioning attempts will involve elements of 'cooling out' (Goffman, 1952). Those who sanction will try, in other words, to assure the person being sanctioned that desisting from deviant activity represents a decision that is wise as well as morally just. It is perhaps for this reason that parents facing the prospect of a son or daughter entering a religious intermarriage focus on the future troublesome character of the relationship.

One of the more interesting features of the reaction faced by couples in the sample relates to the particular character of the difficulties their parents assured them they could expect as a result of the marriage. It is of course the case that there are clear similarities between the arguments produced by parents and basic theological positions stretching back across centuries. "You'll lose your faith", for example, reflects the traditional Catholic view that one's most precious possession is an immortal soul that should be guarded against the merest possibility of loss. "You'll never be rid of the priest", again, is congruent with the Reformers' distrust of mediatory instruments between man and God, particularly as represented by the structure of authority in Roman Catholicism. In a similar way the rhetorics of dissuasion offered to couples are compatible with wider political positions. Protestant rhetorics echo the McCann case and with it the Unionist concern that Northern Ireland should not be delivered into the hands of a clerically dominated state, while on the Catholic side an appeal to solidarity may

well be implicit in the concern for the loss of religious faith. Interestingly, however, the Protestant rhetorics as they were spelt out by parents also imply that marriage to a Roman Catholic has status-demeaning aspects. The inevitable consequence of domination by the Catholic Church in the person of the priest, so the rhetoric has it, is the inability to control fertility and the risk thereby of being impelled as a result into fecklessness and poverty.

The appeal to status considerations seen here is a pattern which has been found in other studies of intermarriage. Harre (1966) has pointed out that in the case of Maori-White marriages in New Zealand, most pressure on couples comes from White parents and is articulated in status terms. Maori parents, it seems, object less, and when they do they couch their arguments in terms of loyalty to the group. Golden (1968) seems also to point in a similar direction insofar as the examples he cites of adverse parental reaction come from White parents primarily and often involve concerns for their own status and well-being.

One possible basis for the ubiquity of such responses by parents may lie in the fact that the form of the 'difficulties' argument reflects Weber's (1960) contention that misfortune arises out of an incongruity between destiny and merit; the difference, that is, between what one deserves to obtain and what one is actually fated to receive. Given the emphasis in Western culture on marriage as a site of adult happiness and self-fulfilment (Hart, 1976; Berger and Kellner, 1964), parents may calculate that the promise of a status-demeaning actuality which falls far short of what one might potentially expect will have a particularly compelling logic.

Finally, it can be noted that unofficial reactions to deviance are constrained by informal jurisdictional boundaries. Such boundaries

give rise to the patterns of differential sanctioning found in the present study whereby parents treated their own son or daughter in a way strikingly different from their treatment of the spouse-candidate. Interestingly, a similar pattern was also found by Mayer in his study of Jewish-Gentile courtships, although there, it seems, there was rather more in the way of hostility directed towards the spouse-candidate than was true for the Catholic-Protestant couples in Northern Ireland. As Mayer points out (1961, 144), the origins of this pattern lie in the inability of parents to exercise power or authority over those who are not members of their own family:

> parents are largely denied the opportunity to pressure the children of others in the manner in which they can pressurize their own. They cannot capitalize on a close emotional relationship; they cannot appeal to a sense of filial obligation, nor are they in a position to invoke other punishments or threats.

In consequence, they are in a not very strong position to undermine an influence running counter to their own.

In summary, then, the form of reaction by others to a proposed interreligious marriage, at least as experienced by those in the interview sample, is constrained by the consequences of reaction for the reactors. In particular, parents find themselves in a problematic situation in which existing goals and familial role-relationships inhibit expulsion or systematic status degradation as a means of sanctioning erring offspring. Typically, too, they have no means, except within certain culturally approved contexts, to take punitive action against the spouse-candidate.

In terms of their content, parental reactions directed to the specifically interreligious nature of an impending 'mixed' marriage are patterned, insofar as the 'difficulties' seen to be attendant on intermarriage vary systematically, by the religious identification of the parents. More specifically, the rhetorics offered by parents in the

attempt to dissuade a son or daughter from out-marriage can be seen to be at least consistent with, on the one hand, a range of theological positions which reflect assumptions about the proper relationship between man and God, and, on the other, with the dominant and competing political ideologies current in Northern Irish society. Additionally, however, the preference of Protestant parents for rhetorics of dissuasion which focus on the status-demeaning aspects of marriage to a Catholic would seem to reflect a perception of and a desire to maintain the relative social position of the Protestant and Catholic communities in Northern Ireland.

## Chapter 11 Aspects of Married Life

The present study has examined religious intermarriage in Northern Ireland in its demographic, historical and ecological aspects and has described in detail the courtship experiences of a small non-random sample of intermarried couples. It is intended in the present chapter to look at the sequel to courtship through some limited comment concerning the married life of couples in the interview sample. A major constraint on this material is imposed by the circumstance that the majority of the couples interviewed had been married only a very short time. This makes difficult the exploration of topics relating, for example, to patterns of marital adjustment. Instead, reflecting a number of the themes which have previously appeared, interest has been focussed on the contingencies faced by couples in a newly established social unit, specifically with regard to their relations with parents and non-kin, and the way in which they deal with stipulations made by the Roman Catholic Church, in this instance in relation to the religious upbringing of children. Finally, an organization is described which attempts to serve the interests of intermarried couples partly through an attempt to improve the pastoral policy of the Christian Churches in Northern Ireland.

### Relations with parents

Couples routinely face as a contingency in early marriage the establishment of a satisfactory pattern of adjustment in their relations with both sets of parents. In the present sample this was

something which was potentially even more problematic in the cases where adverse parental reaction had manifested itself during courtship. In the event, however, even in cases where disapproval by parents had been strong enough for them to absent themselves from the wedding ceremony, there was no evidence that any of the marriages contracted by those in the sample had produced a permanent rupture between the generations. Once the wedding ceremony had actually taken place, or shortly afterwards, relations between parents and their own son or daughter reverted to the state they had been in prior to the courtship. Parents in other words tended, as a number of the couples put it, to "come round in the end".[1]

Mrs Coyle's parents, for example, came round after an interim period in which they utilized a pattern of differential response towards husband and wife similar to the pattern of differential sanctioning seen in courtship. That is, they adopted a stance towards Mr Coyle which was outwardly friendly while offering to their daughter a negative commentary on the relationship. An added factor here seems to have been that Mr Coyle was unemployed for a time after the marriage, and parents mixed negative comments about the interreligious character of the marriage with aspersions on Mr Coyle's abilities as an economic provider. By the time the couple were interviewed, however, the parents, finding apparently that their worst fears had not been realized, and with Mr Coyle eventually obtaining employment, discontinued their sanctioning activities. As Mrs Coyle described it,

> They used for a while after we were married to say things for a while. They'd say "has he asked you to go to mass yet", and things like that, but that's stopped now. They see he doesn't bother with going to church and I've still kept my religion, and they can't say anything about his job now either.

Mr Courtney's mother, too, came round, partly the Courtneys

[1] A similar pattern has been noted by Harré (1966).

thought because she had been presented with a fait accompli, but partly because, as in the case of Mrs Coyle's parents, some of the grounds for her objection - in this case about the nature of the ceremony - were capable of being removed. Thus, not only had "the wedding happened in her absence and she had to accept it", but as Mr Courtney recounted:

> She also knew she was going to win in the end in the sense that she was going to have a religious ceremony. She really couldn't be against us any more, and we said we'd arrange a rectification and any time we went up there she would say "have you done anything about the rectification?".

In other cases reconciliation was apparently aided because marriage effected a shift in a general way in the relationship between a mother and her daughters. This is perhaps suggested by Mrs McLaughlin's comment that a reason for her mother to come round was that her other daughters had also married and in both cases now lived at some distance from the parental home. As a result, her nearest married daughter was now Mrs McLaughlin who felt that "this has left her very dependent on us". The position of her sisters also seems to be a factor in what was, in Mrs Jamieson's case, perhaps the most striking instance of 'coming round' by parents seen in the sample. Her relations with other members of her family, and especially with her mother, after the marriage had taken place stand in remarkable contrast to their character during the courtship period. Noting that "there are certainly no more aggressive notes left out for me" Mrs Jamieson recorded that since the marriage eighteen months previously,

> I've got quite close again to the family, friendly with Daddy. My youngest brother, now, is not so rude to me. ... My mother is over-friendly with me now, greets me at the door. I go up and see them now quite regularly.

Mrs Jamieson attributed the change of heart on the part of her mother to the shift in role which marriage had brought and which put her on a par with her sisters:

> I'm now able to talk to her woman to woman, and she thinks this is great because all the girls are married now.

In the Jamiesons' case an important continuity with the pre-marriage period remained, for there was no repairing of the relationship between Mr Jamieson and his mother-in-law. Mrs Jamieson's mother in fact had not had a single direct contact with Mr Jamieson since the marriage and refused even to visit the Jamiesons' home. Nevertheless, Mrs Jamieson thought that some movement was possible in this last respect provided that a visit by her mother involved no contact with Mr Jamieson. As he himself put it,

> About Christmastime her attitude began to change so that today she is friendlier than ever before - with Colette of course; I still haven't been up to the house, and she has not even been here. But we think that within the next month or two that she will come down, but her problem is still me.

The Jamiesons were still unsure whether in the end Mrs Jamieson's mother would not only visit them in their home but begin to accept Mr Jamieson. That this was not necessarily inevitable is perhaps to be seen from a secondhand account given by one of the couples of another 'mixed' couple, no longer living in Northern Ireland, who had apparently, like the Jamiesons, had a rather stormy courtship. In this case, it seems that while a reconciliation between mother and daughter emerged with the birth of the couple's first child, relations with the husband remained strained. As recounted by the informant in the present sample, the husband during the two-year period before the couple left Northern Ireland would leave his wife and daughter at his mother-in-law's every Sunday afternoon and return for them at a pre-arranged time, all without coming into direct contact with his mother-in-law.

On the other hand, in the Cunninghams' case, where Mrs Cunningham's father had withdrawn from interaction with her, and had not prior to the wedding met Mr Cunningham, relations had been re-established between father and daughter and had been initiated at least superficially between father and son-in-law. According to Mrs Cunningham,

> I think it's important that my father has come round on the surface at any rate. He'll talk to Ian, but not about the present situation, possibly because he doesn't want to offend him. My brother has some Republican records and he sort of insisted that he put them away in case Ian would be offended by them.

One important point here is that if Mrs Cunningham's father could at least submerge his hostility to the relationship to the extent of interacting with his son-in-law, the quality of that relationship as reflected in Mrs Cunningham's comments is one which in its rather circumscribed character is not dissimilar to that which some partners had experienced as spouse-candidates. It seems in fact that in a number of cases the same kind of non-hostile but nevertheless somewhat distant relationship which had obtained between spouse-candidate and prospective parent-in-law continued after marriage. This seems certainly to have been so for Mr McLaughlin and for Mr Quinn who found that Mrs Quinn's step-mother maintained after marriage the same kind of elaborate joking relationship with him that had been a feature of the courtship, while Mrs Cunningham could note of her relationship with her husband's parents that,

> ... we go up visiting every week and his parents are very friendly to me, but it never gets like a family situation. I'm always visiting and they'll say things about the situation when I'm out of the room, but not while I'm there.

Couples in the present sample were not, then, cast adrift from their familial relationships by virtue of an out-marriage. In

those cases where negative reaction to a proposed marriage had been forthcoming in courtship, 'normal' relations between parents and child had been re-established, and for the most part a non-hostile relationship with the incoming son- or daughter-in-law had been maintained or seemed capable of initiation.

Relations with non-kin

Newly married couples of course need not only to establish patterns of adjustment with parents but also with non-kin of various kinds. Among these may be new neighbours, as the couple set up a new home, and in the case particularly of those in the present sample, many of whom married and entered the labour force soon after graduation, new work-mates. How in the neighbourhood or in the workplace perceptions of the couples were innocently or guilefully induced forms a major focus of the present section.

There seemed to be a general feeling in the sample that if it were necessary to make a choice between a totally Catholic area in which to live and a totally Protestant one, the former was to be preferred on the assumption that Catholic paramilitaries were less likely to regard an individual Protestant as a threat than Protestant paramilitaries would an individual Catholic. In the event, however, few of those in the sample had actually had to make a choice of this kind. Only one couple in fact lived in an area capable of being described as a ghetto, where, as it happens, the general prediction concerning the attitude of Catholic paramilitaries was in their case confirmed. As the husband recounted,

> I was called upon by someone associated with the Provisional I.R.A. and investigated. He came to make sure I wasn't a member of the Special Branch and that was all.

More usually couples were able to enter sectors of the housing market which channelled them away from 'troubled' areas. Some couples, for example, continued living in the university area in Belfast. This has something of the character of a neutral area within the city, and since flats comprise a substantial part of the housing stock in the area there is some potential for the maintenance of anonymity. Other couples had the resources to move after marriage into middle-class areas either in the city itself or in the suburban areas which have grown up around it in recent years.

Although, as indicated, some couples had been intimidated during courtship, they seem as a consequence of the choices they were able to make in the housing market to have been able to avoid problems of intimidation in housing which, it is clear from the accounts given by Darby and Morris in their (1974) study of forced population movements in Northern Ireland, are sometimes faced by Catholic-Protestant couples. Nevertheless, most took the opportunity not to advertise the 'mixed' status of their relationship if it were possible to avoid it.

It is of course unusual in Northern Ireland for enquiries about religious affiliation to be made directly. Instead reliance is had on cues of various kinds. Couples found that neighbours and others apparently looked for cues but, making an assumption of homogamy, used them to characterize the couple rather than each individual partner. As Mrs Laverty observed, for example,

> We don't have much to do with the neighbours,
> but I think they think we're both Catholics
> because of our name.

Very often the assumption of homogamy led acquaintances into making mistakes and gaffes of various kinds. Mrs Laverty's colleagues,

like her neighbours, took her to be a Catholic, so that "conversation stopped when I came into the room" - a state of affairs which continued until it was discovered that she was actually a Protestant, whereupon "people started talking openly about the situation in my presence". In the case of Mr Daly, whose workmates assumed he was Protestant because they were aware that one of his children had been baptised in a Presbyterian ceremony, a faux pas of some magnitude resulted, as can be seen from the account Mr Daly gave of a dialogue with one of his colleagues:

> This guy at work came along one day and said,
> "You want to join the Orange Lodge?"
> I said, "No, not really",
> and he said "Come on".
> So I said, "If I join what will happen?"
> So he said, "I can't tell you, it's secret".
> So I said, "I can't join anything I don't know
> anything about".
> And he said, "Come on, you're a good Prot.
> (Protestant) aren't you?",
> and I said, "Well, not really".
> He said, "What are you then?"
> "Well", I said, "actually I'm a Catholic".
> "Oh", he said, "I didn't know that's what I
> was working with".

Some of Burton's informants (1978, 64-65) were able to recount instances of a similar sort where cues had been misread and the etiquette of demeanour breached. In these situations, as apparently happened in the episode described by Mr Daly, the interaction very quickly ground to an embarrassed halt. Perhaps unusually in Northern Ireland, where situations of this kind arose in a context where both of the partners in an interreligious marriage were present, it was possible for the situation to be managed.

To take an example: Mr Coyle was thought by his neighbours to be a Protestant because his wife attended Church of Ireland services on Sunday mornings and because he taught in a state school.

Much to his amusement these cues were misinterpreted such that, "the woman next door comes in sometimes and makes some pretty earthy comments about the I.R.A. and the Catholics". When this happened, however, such comments were not contested but rather were handled through teamwork (Goffman, 1958) and by one of the partners passing.[1] In the Coyles' case, whenever a gaffe of this kind was made by the neighbour, Mrs Coyle would make some sort of vague assent while her Catholic husband would remain silent (though usually inwardly amused). Clearly, though, in this case, as perhaps in Mr Daly's, a line was drawn between dissembling and the complete denial of one's religious background, so that Mr Coyle could also add,

> If I was asked outright I would say I was Catholic but I don't particularly want it to get around.

In the case of Mrs Laverty and Mr Daly, the fact that they were partners in a 'mixed' marriage emerged because cues had been misinterpreted. In other cases, however, the nature of the marriage was disclosed at least to those who could be trusted. Mrs Shaw, Mrs McLaughlin and Mrs Kearns - all of whom worked in a professional capacity - confided in workmates once they "got to know them well".

In two additional cases a headmaster and a supervisor were appraised of the situation, so that they might deal with any unfortunate repercussions which might arise as a result of others finding out. This was something which worried in particular those in the sample who were teachers, all of whom supposed that their job would be made difficult if their pupils discovered that they were a partner in a Catholic-Protestant marriage. As one female respondent put it,

> I teach in a state school with almost exclusively Protestant working-class kids. We're very conscious of the fact that if the pupils found out it would be impossible to teach there.

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[1] Passing seems typically to be regarded in the literature as an individual rather than a team strategy.

A similar situation was feared by one of the wives in the sample who was a social worker with clients in both a Catholic area and a Protestant area. Suspecting that her clients might become difficult if the fact of her marriage were known, she was forced to adopt multiple passing strategies in her work situation. Although her Christian name had a rather 'Catholic' ring to it, she had lost on marriage a 'neutral' maiden name and gained a surname which would be regarded commonly in Northern Ireland as Protestant. On the one hand, therefore, she encouraged Catholic clients to use her forename but, on the other, let it be known among her Protestant clients that she preferred to be addressed as Mrs _____. Furthermore, as she goes on,

> Sometimes I have to sign chits for them to get things from the social services. Whenever I'm dealing with a Protestant client I use only the initial of my first name and I write my surname very legibly. If it's a Catholic client I make an illegible squiggle for my second name and write my first name in the Irish way with a fada (a 'long' accent) over the first letter.

Relations with non-kin, then, are potentially problematic for those in Northern Ireland who enter a Catholic-Protestant marriage, not least because the female partner may acquire on marriage a religiously anomalous name. Nevertheless, at least in areas where a degree of anonymity is possible, couples appear able, through individual and team passing techniques, and with the help of a taken-for-granted assumption of homogamy to retain a measure of social invisibility.[1]

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[1] This is something which may be contrasted with the treatment of couples in interracial marriages whose physical visibility makes them vulnerable to petty harassment in public places and to discrimination in the search for housing (Wolf, 1971).

The upbringing of children

Although no detailed and conclusive evidence is available there appear to be grounds for taking as substantially correct the popular view in Ireland that a majority of the children born to inter-married parents are brought up as Roman Catholics. Walsh (1970) has shown, for example, that figures for Catholic-Protestant birth rate differentials in the Republic of Ireland are consistent with the assumption that the offspring of 'mixed' marriages are less often brought up as Protestants than they are as Catholics. Evidence for a similar pattern in Northern Ireland comes from Rose's survey. Some 4% of Rose's (1971, 507) respondents claimed to have been the product of an interreligious marriage. Of these two-thirds, a clear but by no means overwhelming majority, declared themselves to be Roman Catholic.

It has been taken to be self-evident that patterns of this kind are a consequence of the requirement laid upon Catholic partners by their church to ensure that the children of such a marriage are baptized and educated in the Catholic faith. No attempt, however, has actually been made previously to investigate how couples do in fact make decisions about the religious upbringing of their children.

That the situation is perhaps a little more complicated than is generally thought may be seen if it is recalled from an earlier discussion that while a majority of respondents had been married in a Catholic church and had made an affirmation concerning the Catholic upbringing of any children resulting from the marriage, many couples had not at that time made a firm decision about the upbringing of children. In fact it seems generally to have been the case that couples postponed decisions on the matter until such time as they actually began to consider seriously having children.

As a consequence, therefore, for a number of those couples who still had no children at the time of interview, indecision in fact remained. Thus, for example, Mr and Mrs Beggs who had, it will be remembered, a strongly ecumenical orientation towards their relationship and who had discussed and resolved many of the issues which had faced them in their relationship, had still not reached when interviewed a decision on the question of children:

> We haven't really sorted this out yet. The problem is, where will they be baptized? Grandparents of course will come into this, you know - they'll start throwing their weight around. We haven't worked this out ... we still don't know what we're going to do.

For the Cunninghams, too, the question of children was "an issue we still haven't decided", while similar comments were forthcoming from the Clarks, the Tynans and the Quinns.

The remainder of those in the sample had established at least in outline what they would do when children did actually arrive. In addition, five couples in the sample - the Fannins, the Dalys, the McQuillans, the Boyles and the Curries - had children at the time of interview. The Boyles and the McQuillans were of course 'ecumenical couples' and had adopted a similar position to the question, but the other three couples had each reached decisions about the religious upbringing of children in different ways. Since in the main the positions these 'non-ecumenical couples' had reached also corresponded to the intentions expressed by those couples who did not have children but who had established what they would do, it is possible to have some confidence that the patterns found here reflect the actual decision-making processes adopted by couples.

One solution adopted by a small number of couples was to decide the question of schooling by reference to some notion of

educational standards. The Parks, for example, had tentatively decided that they would baptize their children as Roman Catholics but, as indicated earlier, were not entirely committed to giving them a Catholic education. Instead they had decided that "what we wanted for the kids was the best possible education for them, we would send them to the best school we could find for them".

A similar position had been adopted by Mr and Mrs Fannin. At the time of interview the Fannins had an 8-week-old son. The couple had signed the pre-nuptial declaration required by the Roman Catholic Church although, as Mr Fannin put it, they had "refused to give it any credibility". Accordingly, the Fannins intended that the local minister, who had befriended them, should conduct the baptizmal ceremony. According to Mr Fannin,

> My mother felt that David should have been baptized in a Catholic church and I had to say, "It doesn't really matter who baptizes him as long as he's baptized",

but at the same time he could also suggest that,

> it's a gesture towards Ruth's mother and obviously Ruth herself is pleased about it.

In something of a contrast to this conciliatory note, though, Mr Fannin was fairly adamant that just as, for him, his children's education was no concern of the Catholic Church, neither was it a matter for his mother-in-law. Moreover, he himself had some fairly definite plans on the matter. These seemed implicitly to favour Catholic schools but made the final criterion for choice the quality of the school itself:

> I've made it quite clear to Ruth's mother that although the education of our children is a matter for us, if we have sons they will be educated at the local primary school, probably the Catholic one if there is one convenient. If not, at a state school. But that when it came to their secondary education that I would send them to whatever public school I could find and that I could afford, and I certainly wouldn't be adamant about sending them to a Catholic school. Some of the non-Catholic schools have a lot to recommend them.

Mr Fannin's reference to sons here is significant. No instance was found in the sample of anyone explicitly adopting the nineteenth-century solution of bringing up the male children in the family to follow the father, and the female children the mother. However, Mr Fannin's plans for any daughters he might have meant that they would necessarily have a Catholic education:

> I also made it clear that if a daughter arrived, without any shadow of a doubt she was going to a convent school .... I've yet to come across a convent school that wasn't a good school, not only with their examinations but also with a degree of education, and it also teaches them to keep their ankles crossed until they're old enough to do something about it (laughs). Ruth was quite agreeable to that as well.

One possible benefit to the couples of adopting this approach was that they and others were potentially able to justify almost any decision which was made since whatever they did was premised on its suitability for the child. At the same time, as perhaps might be suggested by Mr Fannin's preference for convent schools, and the previously quoted remark of the priest who when appraised of the Parks' position had suggested that "Catholic schools are the best anyway", perceptions of what constituted a 'good school' could be made to work in favour of one denomination rather than another.

As noted earlier two of the couples in the sample whose orientation towards their relationship was an explicitly ecumenical one - the McQuillans and the Boyles - had children when interviewed. (The McQuillans were interviewed twice. The first time soon after their marriage, the second shortly after the birth of their second child.) The children in neither case had yet reached school age and it had not therefore been decided in an explicit manner how they were to be formally educated. Both couples leant, though, to the possibility

of a Quaker school and, as might be expected from their ecumenical orientation, were enthusiastic supporters of the movement to establish integrated education in Northern Ireland. A very important issue for them and one which they had in each case already dealt with was, however, the form of baptizmal ceremony which their children should undergo.

As the McQuillans were married after the changes made in the Roman Catholic regulations on 'mixed' marriages in 1970, Mrs McQuillan did not have to make a formal written promise as far as the children were concerned. Their first child was baptized in the local Catholic church with Mrs McQuillan drawing out of the service those elements she found acceptable:

> I saw it as him being baptized as a member of the Christian community. I suppose I was putting more emphasis on that than perhaps the Church's view.

By the time their second child came along the McQuillans had developed the view that they should now have a joint Anglican-Roman Catholic baptizmal service which would more adequately reflect the 'spiritual unity' between them and which would confer some institutional recognition on their status as an interconfessional couple. As Mr McQuillan explained,

> The point of having the baptizm in the Anglican Church is to get the Catholic Church to recognize this is a mixed marriage, because once they've given permission for a mixed marriage they just want to forget about it.

This was a position echoed by the Boyles who had also sought a joint baptizmal rite for their son. Said Mr Boyle,

> We'd rejected the idea that the way you got unity in a mixed family was by one partner turning to join the other's denomination. As far as we're concerned the unity of the family is best served when both partners have an equal status. Because we have this equal status and because we're a family unit we wanted to have a baptizmal service where both Churches could be involved.

Whatever their wishes in this matter, however, both the Boyles and the McQuillans found that joint services of the kind they had envisaged were not possible. "As far as the Catholic Church is concerned", said Mrs Boyle,"the Catholic rite of baptizm means the child is being baptized formally into the Roman Catholic Church, so because of this they won't allow a joint ceremony". The McQuillans had received a rather similar response,which moreover put into question their claim to a spiritual unity in their relationship which prefigured the institutional unity towards which the Churches should be moving. As Mrs McQuillan recalled:

> We were told that while we might have a spiritual unity in our marriage it was false to confuse the unity of a marriage with the unity of the Church.

Faced with a refusal by the Catholic authorities to co-operate, the Boyles reluctantly went ahead with a Catholic baptizm feeling that without any ceremony their child could not be regarded as having been initiated as a Christian. The McQuillans, however, as a result of the ruling by their local Catholic bishop, who would not make available to them a joint service of the kind they sought, took a radical step which is presumably an unusual one for a committed Christian family. They decided that the child would remain unbaptized until a ceremony of the kind they had envisaged became possible.

The determination to thwart the regulations upon which the Roman Catholic Church insisted in cases of 'mixed' marriage was, of course, much more characteristic of some of the Protestant partners in the sample. For Mr Jamieson, for example, there could, of course, be no question of his children having a Catholic upbringing. He expressed his position in characteristic fashion:

> If we have any children they will be brought up as Protestants; they will not be brought up as Catholics because in my mind that is the most important thing. I think it is very

> important that the children are Protestants and I think Colette knows this, that I have always expected this, and I don't think that she will do anything to hinder it.

Mrs Daly, too, succeeded in ensuring that her children were not to be raised as Roman Catholics, though in her case her husband proved to be rather less acquiescent than was true for Mrs Jamieson. The Dalys had been married for five years - the longest duration found in the sample - and had three children when interviewed. Following their decision to marry, the Dalys had had many heated discussions about the religious upbringing of children. Eventually, however, according to Mr Daly, to accommodate Mrs Daly's objections to the Roman Catholic stipulations relating to children,

> we compromised that the children be brought up as Presbyterians provided we got married in the Catholic Church.

The first child to arrive duly received a Presbyterian baptizm, but only after seven months had elapsed. Mr Daly was now unhappy about the pact he had made:

> You see I had given my promise that the children would be baptized as Presbyterians and brought up as Presbyterians but at that particular time Margaret wasn't going to church and wasn't showing any interest in the church. I was going to mass every day and sort of rediscovering my religion, so I thought, "Well the children should be Catholics, to have the benefits that I've had, the tremendous sort of feeling I've had".

However, Mrs Daly was not inclined to retreat, her resistance having been strengthened as a result of having attended a Catholic baptizmal ceremony which she "didn't like one bit" and which she thought to be "positively mediaeval". She had apparently mistakenly taken a reference in the service to the doctrine of Original Sin to imply that the child's conception itself was regarded as sinful in the eyes of the eyes of the Roman Catholic Church. "I object to that strongly", she

said:

> It made something simple and very pure seem very tainted. I said to Tom that I was very unhappy about this, about their going through that ceremony.

In the end, in a sense, both wills prevailed. Mrs Daly after the birth of her second child became a regular churchgoer and took to playing an active role in the child's informal religious socialization. This was a satisfactory outcome from Mr Daly's point of view, and when a second and third child arrived they were baptized as Presbyterians and will in all probability go to state schools.

The pattern which appeared most commonly in the sample depended very much less it seems on strictly held principles but was one in which a decision was made along the lines of the 'balance of salience' pattern described in relation to the marriage ceremony. Here again it is possible to see at work a theme identified by Towler and Chamberlain (1974) as forming a major element of 'common religion'. This was that Christianity, shorn of its institutional excesses, formed the basis of an ethical system which was valuable in itself and useful to transmit. Its transmission, however, was seen to depend on at least some measure of commitment to institutional religion, provided that this was not taken to extremes. The religious socialization of children was then entrusted to the partner who was seen to have the greatest degree of commitment and who therefore had most 'to give' to the children.

The Taylors, for example, had decided that their children would be raised as Roman Catholics despite the fact that they had not been married in a Catholic ceremony and had therefore made no commitmnts as far as the raising of children was concerned. Mrs Taylor felt that she would prefer to send her children to a Catholic school since her own Catholic background "hasn't done me any harm". This was something

Mr Taylor seemed prepared to accept, for despite a view of institutional religion which was scarcely flattering, it also seemed to him that "I have nothing to give them anyway".

The Coyles seem also to have opted for a similar solution, which given Mr Coyle's almost complete detachment from institutional Catholicism was likely to lead to any children they might have being brought up as Protestants. In the case of Mr and Mrs Kearns, on the other hand, as Mr Kearns explained,

> We have decided on a logical basis that the children should be brought up as Catholics ... I had nothing to offer them. My wife had something and I respect her for that. She has some excellent views, and she doesn't seem to believe everything that the Church tells her. So because I have the faith I have in her I would trust my children to be brought up the way she is rather than the way I am.

With the Curries, though (one of the couples who had children), a slightly different pattern emerged. The couple had been married in a Catholic ceremony to please Mr Coyle's parents and had made the declaration that they would raise the children of the marriage as Catholic. At the time of interview the couple had a three-year-old daughter who had been baptized as a Catholic and whom they intended to send to a Catholic school. The basis for this decision was not, however, the partners' respective levels of religious involvement but the pattern of cultural identification found within the relationship. Mr Currie was one of those Catholic men in the sample who had rejected his Catholicism and who regarded himself as a non-believer. However, he still wished for his daughter to gain an understanding in a cultural sense of what it meant to be a Catholic. As he put it,

> It's a cultural thing. I'm a Catholic but I'm a cultural Catholic. That's the way I grew up, so even if I don't go to church, I know how these people feel. I know why they're up on the barricades, and that's something I want to transmit to my daughter so she can know what it all means.

Mrs Currie, who was English, apparently regarded this as an acceptable position though she also saw a Catholic education as a means of giving her daughter an element of religious socialization which she herself could not provide. "I don't have very much to give her from a religious point of view, so it's just as well she can take that from Tim".

Whether the devolution of responsibility for the religious socialization of children onto the partner who can 'give them most' represents the modal decision-making strategy for Catholic-Protestant couples as a whole is of course impossible to say. If it were the case, however, it would be possible to argue, as before with the ceremony, that an excess of cases would result in which the children of the marriage would be brought up as Roman Catholic. This is so because if women involve themselves in religious practice more than men, children are more likely to follow the religion of their mother than of their father. In a situation, then, like the one in Northern Ireland, where the number of Catholic wives is greater than the number of Catholic husbands, children being raised in the religion of the mother are more likely to be Roman Catholic.

It is perhaps worth stressing again that in cases where children 'follow' the more involved partner, couples saw religious socialization much more as a source of ethical conduct or occasionally of cultural understanding than as a means for providing doctrinal inculcation. They were aware that 'Catholic' and 'Protestant' were ascribed characteristics which the system of separate schooling in Northern Ireland produced and through which were reproduced the divisions in Northern Irish society and the obsessive preoccupation with religious identity which they deplored. Without access to integrated schooling many of them felt that by remaining in Northern

Ireland they would be placing children in a situation in which inevitably they would be faced by difficulties in adjustment. Therefore it is hardly surprising to find that, when asked about how they proposed to raise the children of the marriage, couples frequently spoke about migration. "It will be more easy when we get out of Northern Ireland" was the comment one couple made, for example, when asked about their plans for children. Similarly, according to Mr Shaw,

> I don't think it particularly matters what we do about the children as long as we get away from this place,

while Mr Warren could also remark that,

> It would be no problem if we lived in another country, but it isn't fair to make children cross the divide.

The progeny of intermarriage have been taken classically in sociology to have the status of 'marginal men'. Jenkins and MacRae (1967) have attributed a strategic role to such marginal individuals in straddling the boundaries of the two communities in Northern Ireland. It might instead be plausible to suggest that this is something rather more characteristic of some sectors of Southern Irish society where a number of political figures (such as Garrett Fitzgerald) are products of both religious traditions. Perhaps as the potential parents interviewed in the present study recognize, the offspring of a 'mixed' marriage in Northern Ireland are faced either with what one might almost describe as the inevitability of achieving an ascribed status or else are given no role in Northern Irish society because they are born elsewhere.

## The Northern Ireland Mixed Marriage Association

The founding of the Northern Ireland Mixed Marriage Association (NIMMA) dates from 1974 when a group of intermarried couples who had attended a weekend conference at Corrymeela, an ecumenical centre in Northern Ireland, decided to establish an organization which would serve the needs and articulate the views of couples like themselves. An initial series of meetings held subsequent to that conference was apparently followed by a period of inactivity before the Association was again revived some time in 1976. It is not proposed to offer at this point a detailed analysis of the Association, its work or its membership. The main phase of its activity began after the fieldwork for the present study ended. In any case, a detailed study by Marie-Alice Laulo of NIMMA, and its equivalent body in the Republic of Ireland, The Association of Interchurch Families, is currently under way. What will be offered instead is a summary of the Association's aims and activities together with an attempt to assess its significance. The data for this derive from three sources. One of the 'ecumenical couples' described earlier went on to become founder members of NIMMA. During a subsequent interview with this couple a description of the Association's origins and activities was obtained. Copies of the organization's quarterly newsletter from 1977 onwards were collected and analysed and informal participant observation was carried out at the Association's annual conference in 1977.

In its publicity material NIMMA describes itself as "a loose association of those who are concerned with marriage across religious divides in Northern Ireland". As this implies membership is not restricted to intermarried couples alone, and the Association includes among its members clerics from the major Christian denominations in

Northern Ireland who take a pastoral interest in the question of inter-denominational marriage. The use of the term 'divides' and the fact that the organization uses the expression 'Mixed Marriage' rather than 'Interchurch' in its title stems from a recognition that religious inter-marriage may involve members of non-Christian religious bodies and those whose religious identification is nominal. From time to time the Association has included members who fall into both these categories. In the main, however, its membership is made up largely of couples where both partners are committed Christians, and who share a positive orientation towards ecumenism. The membership of the Association is small in number - its maximum membership seems not to have risen to more than thirty couples - and appears to be highly fluid. Observation at the Association's annual conference suggested that members tended to be in their middle to late twenties and to be mainly in professional occupations. A number were in the early stages of family building.

The Association has three aims: to provide a forum for self-help and the discussion of members' problems; the provision of advice and information to couples who seek it; and what is described as "influencing the local community's understanding of mixed marriages". The formal activities of the organization which are directed to the first of these aims reflect the ecumenical orientation of its core membership. Apart from various social activities the Association organizes a regular series of meetings at which a speaker, usually a clergyman sympathetic to the Association, presents a talk on a topic related to ecumenism, which is then followed by discussion. Topics presented to meetings include, for example, 'Presbyterians and Marriage', 'Pluralism and the Catholic Church', 'Ecumenism and its World Dimensions', and 'Reflections on Protestantism and Catholicism as forms of Christian Belief'. A yearly conference is also organized by the Association. Held at the

ecumenical centre where NIMMA was founded, it tends to have a strongly ecumenical flavour both in terms of its programme and through the provision of joint liturgical activity.

When funds permit NIMMA places an advertisement in the major evening paper in Northern Ireland, 'The Belfast Telegraph', which has a substantial readership among both Protestants and Catholics. The advertisement reads "Mixed Marriage? For information, advice, support, telephone 25008 daytime!" The telephone number is that of an inter-church organization which provides the Association with an accommodation address. Callers are put in telephone but not, in the first instance, face-to-face contact with members of the Association who are available on a rota basis. Although it has apparently never been necessary, the indirect link to NIMMA members is a precaution against the possibility of threats or intimidation. No detailed records appear to be kept on referrals, so their numbers and the reasons given for seeking help remain obscure. It is known that advice has been given with some frequency on how to extract maximum flexibility from the Roman Catholic regulations on 'mixed' marriages, while in one or two cases members of the Association have assisted couples who have been subjected to intimidation to leave Northern Ireland and make a new home in England.

The Association's third aim of influencing the way in which religious intermarriage is understood within the 'local community' is accomplished in two ways: through publicity concerning the Association and its work, and by attempting to influence Church opinion leaders and decision makers. By analogy with homophile organizations which exist to promote 'gay liberation', NIMMA can be thought of as being in a sense a 'heterogamophile organization' concerned with the removal of stigmatizing attitudes and legislation directed towards intermarried couples. Much as did the ecumenical couples described earlier, the

Association attempts to stress a strongly positive image of intermarriage. Such marriages are seen to represent a source of reconciliation in Northern Ireland: a positive and optimistic affirmation of unity to be set against a pessimistic view of Northern Irish society which sees only the pervasiveness of division. Interfaith marriages are defined as providing both a challenge which forces couples to overcome denominational boundaries and an opportunity for couples to discern the continuities in the Christian tradition to which they can both subscribe.

NIMMA receives periodic media coverage in Northern Ireland and its activities have been reported on farther afield. However, its relationship with the media appears to have a somewhat ambivalent character. Press, radio and television are seen as important vehicles which permit the organization to be brought to the attention of intermarried or intermarrying couples who may be socially isolated or in difficulties. At the same time there is a feeling that the topic is inevitably trivialized by the media and that the positive character of interfaith marriages and the potential they provide for ecumenical growth are insufficiently recognized. Thus, programmes or articles on the topic of 'mixed' marriages appearing in the popular media tend to be critically reviewed in the Association's newsletter. A Sunday newspaper article dealing with the problems faced by intermarried couples in Northern Ireland has been criticized in one issue of the newsletter, for example, for taking a 'Romeo and Juliet' approach to the topic, while an account of a local radio interview with an intermarried couple in another issue bemoans the fact that the possibility of shared prayer and worship had not been mentioned.

In some respects, it appears, NIMMA has been, over time, rather more successful in sensitizing the various religious bodies in

Northern Ireland to their view of 'mixed' marriage. The Association collects case studies in which couples offer 'consumer reports' on their dealings with Church functionaries, difficulties they may have had in obtaining dispensations and their impressions of the treatment which they received. Official church pronouncements on mixed marriages in Ireland and elsewhere are routinely monitored. This material serves as a basis for 'atrocity stories' (Goffman, 1963, 21) concerning the insensitive treatment of couples at the hands of clergy, the indignity visited on parents by a ceremony monopolized by clergy not of their denomination, and the inequitable treatment of couples in Ireland compared with those in other countries.

The Association uses this material to pressure the various Christian Churches in Northern Ireland to modify their pastoral practice with regard to 'mixed' marriages, and, in the case of the Roman Catholic Church to change its marriage legislation. Although initially regarded with not a small degree of suspicion by the Roman Catholic authorities, the Association is now apparently accepted as a legitimate voice for intermarried couples. In consequence they now have contact with those responsible in the Catholic Church for formulating pastoral policy, and have, for example, submitted their views to a working party set up by the Roman Catholic Primate of All Ireland to consider possible revisions to the Catholic regulations on mixed marriages.

The overall significance of the organization is difficult to assess but one suspects for a number of reasons that it will remain small and will retain, or even intensify, its ecumenical character. Firstly, it seems clear that for many couples the assistance which NIMMA provides in managing the Roman Catholic regulations on Catholic-Protestant marriage is likely to be welcome, especially where parents

are hostile to the proposed marriage. Clearly too, however, couples also find a variety of ways to legitimate their relationship without recourse to an ecumenical ideology which implies high levels of religious commitment and the measure of theological sophistication typical of the Association's core membership. Secondly, a tendency for a bifurcation between 'clients' and members may be encouraged by the restrictions on fully public activity which the situation imposes on the organization. Conditions of secrecy or semi-secrecy, as Simmel (1950, 360; see also Ponse, 1978, 77-78) has observed may tend to intensify ties among those who are already members of a group at the expense of those who have only indirect contact with it. Thirdly, following Becker (1963, 152-55), one can note that a problem which faces reformist organizations is that in attaining their aim of remedying a state of affairs they regard as undesirable they simultaneously lose their raison-d'être. In the case of NIMMA a major liberalization of the Roman Catholic legislation on Catholic-Protestant marriage would remove a major focus of the organization's activity. Were this to happen, however, it seems likely that the Association would turn its attention more fully to issues such as joint baptizm and intercommunion - a development which one would suspect would enhance even further its character as a specifically ecumenical organization.

Summary

Although brief and disjointed, the foregoing has revealed a number of features concerning the married life of Catholic-Protestant couples in Northern Ireland. First of all, a pattern of 'coming round' by parents similar to that found in other studies of intermarriage was common for the couples studied in Northern Ireland. Secondly, the ability of couples to manage their relations with the world outside the

relationship has been noted with attention being drawn to the ability of intermarried couples to act as a team to permit the passing of one partner in problematic situations. Third, decision-making strategies by couples in relation to the religious upbringing of children have been described, and a suggestion made concerning the origins of the apparent tendency for a majority of the children from 'mixed' marriages to be brought up as Roman Catholics. It has been noted, too, that educational arrangements in Northern Ireland have consequences for the upbringing of children which couples find difficult to escape while remaining in Northern Ireland. Finally, a brief description has been offered of an interesting development which has occurred in relation to intermarried couples in Northern Ireland: an organization which has attempted in various ways to serve their interests.

# Chapter 12 Conclusions

This final chapter draws the work to a close by reviewing in summary form what has been said so far and by drawing together, in conclusion, a number of the implications which the study has both for the study of mate-selection and in relation to the conflict in Northern Ireland.

## Summary of main findings

Catholic-Protestant marriages are statistically deviant in Northern Ireland. According to the special tabulation of the 1971 census of Northern Ireland supplied for the present study, only some 2% of married couples enumerated declared themselves to be in Catholic-Protestant marriages. This figure almost certainly represents an underestimate of the true incidence of such marriages in Northern Ireland because the census figures cannot take into account the extent of religious conversion, emigration and under-enumeration resulting from non-response to the voluntary question on religious affiliation included on the census form. At the same time, on the basis of scattered additional evidence, it is unlikely that the number of 'mixed' couples 'hidden' by these factors is very considerable.

Although it is often assumed in Northern Ireland that inter-faith marriage is a middle-class phenomenon, the tabulation suggests that the likelihood of marriage across the Catholic-Protestant divide is no greater for manual workers than for non-manual workers when controls are introduced for relative group size. Though care needs to be taken in interpretation in the absence of data on conversion patterns, there are indications that Catholic women marry out more often than

Catholic men and that Catholics marry Anglicans more frequently than they do members of other denominations. There are indications that the incidence of Catholic-Protestant marriages was rising in Northern Ireland in the late 1960s.

Analysis of pre-marital residential locations of couples marrying in a Catholic parish in Belfast suggests that marriages rarely occur across rigid territorial boundaries and that the various Catholic enclaves in the city are linked by marriage. Paradoxically, the onset of the 'troubles' in Northern Ireland may have had a temporary effect in encouraging an increase in intermarriage by spreading the geographical area over which mate-seeking took place.

In what is possibly a corollary to the findings which relate to ecological restrictions on mate-seeking behaviour, it was found that a majority of the couples interviewed in the study met in contexts which were formally organized and where the possibility of routinely recurring contact was high. Couples displayed relatively little evidence of being predisposed towards intermarriage by instrumental factors.

Five groups of couples were distinguished according to the nature of the courtship processes within their relationships. These included couples, not previously described in detail in the literature, who brought an ecumenical orientation to their relationship and couples similar in many respects to those previously described in the literature as 'emancipated'.

An association was observed between the attitudes, values and definitions which couples brought to the relationship, the character of the subsequent courtship career and the mode of moral disassociation adopted by couples. On the one hand there appeared to be a contrastive-parallel pattern. Couples perceived differences arising from the

partners' putative religious backgrounds to be marginal or, especially in the case of the ecumenical couples, of a kind which was capable of resolution under the appropriate conditions. Marginal differences were made the basis of a justificatory ideology in which the pattern of intradyadic adjustment couples perceived in the relationship was contrasted favourably with a negative definition of the extradyadic environment. Reference to this ideology allowed couples to minimize the impact of negative definitions of their relationship by those external to it. Couples' courtship careers in these cases had a parallel character. Couples in these groups do not appear necessarily to have met the contingencies which faced them in any particular sequence. Self-disclosure could proceed, as seems to have happened with some of the ecumenical couples, prior to the establishment of the relationship or concurrently with it. Further, the two could have a reciprocal and cumulative effect on each other capable of heightening the perceived disjunction between intradyadic adjustment and extradyadic disharmony.

On the other hand, relationships could also be seen as having a suppressive-serial character. Here couples proceeded to marriage despite their clearly antithetical views. In these cases the potential for open conflict was suppressed for most of the duration of the relationship because of the episodic character of the courtship career. Couples of this type met the contingencies deriving from the openness of the mate-selection system in a sequential manner and in a way which permitted self-disclosure to be limited until after the relationship had been established. This was possible either because the context within which establishment took place encouraged avoidance or because a rapid initial attraction 'locked' the couples into the relationship before their differences became apparent. It proved impossible for differences to remain undisclosed indefinitely and, when this

occurred, conflict ensured. Conflict resolution was accomplished either through bargaining or as a result of circumstances producing a change of viewpoint by one or both partners. A further outcome of conflict resolution was that the applicability of stigmatizing conceptions potentially attached by a partner from one group to the members of the other could be denied.

The various Roman Catholic regulations relating to the form of ceremony required for the marriage to be valid in the eyes of the Catholic Church and the stipulation by that Church that the children of an interfaith marriage be brought up as Roman Catholics are for historical reasons a major point of contention between the two communities in Northern Ireland. In the main it seems that where couples comply with these regulations they do so with their significance, applicability or legitimacy being informally denied. There is some evidence that this is actually aided by the bureaucratic procedures used by the Catholic Church in connexion with 'mixed' marriage. The processes by which decisions relating to the marriage ceremony and to the religious upbringing of children are actually made by couples are varied. However, a pattern referred to as the 'balance of salience' which relies on resolution of the issue according to the wishes of the partner perceived to have the greater level of religious involvement in the relationship tends for demographic reasons to produce a decision in apparent accordance with the Catholic regulations.

Parents reacted to an impending interreligious marriage in a relatively benign way because, it was argued, the conditions under which informal reaction takes place limit the type and intensity of the reaction which can be offered. Rhetorics of dissuasion varied systematically depending on the religion of the parents. In particular

Protestant rhetorics relied on a view of the Roman Catholic Church which appealed implicitly to the allegedly status-demeaning aspects of compliance with the authority of the Catholic priest. Public expressions of disapproval of a proposed interreligious marriage were more likely to be forthcoming from more distant kin and from acquaintances than from those who stood in closer relations of blood, especially siblings, or of friendship. There was little evidence that intermarriage was interpreted in the context of the sorts of sexual mythologies which have been associated with interracial situations.

Echoing the findings of other studies, there was evidence of parents 'coming round' after marriage. Couples who were intermarried tended to avoid making their status apparent in any general way to those around them. In problematic situations such couples had recourse to passing strategies, either as individuals or as a team. A number of couples linked decisions about the religious upbringing of children with decisions about migration.

Some theoretical implications

While it is unlikely that sociologists will abandon studies relating to patterns of incidence and selection in marital choice and the conditions under which they occur, it is clear that a reorientation of the literature on mate-selection is long overdue. One can say for example with some understatement that the homogamy principle is one of the more well-attested propositions in sociology. There is surely little to be gained by further repetition of the point especially when, as Harris (1969, 159) points out, that 'principle' "describes ... a regularity which is the outcome of a whole set of social processes most of which have nothing to do with mate selection", and about which in themselves and their interrelations relatively little is known.

It is suggested that the scope and depth of studies of marital choice might be broadened by three sets of approaches which in various ways have been pointed to in the present study: the longitudinal, the contextual and the comparative. Despite the work of people like Murstein (1976) and Lewis (1973a) there is still a need to understand that mate-selection is precisely that - selection - and that the circumstances under which that selection occurs in modern Western societies necessarily imply a longitudinal perspective. One consequence of adopting such a perspective is that one must be prepared to recognize and deal with the complexity of courtship. This has its dangers as in Bolton's (1961) work where, despite much that is valuable, the desire to remain true to the richness of the data produces in the end an interpretive schemae which is merely unwieldy. A way of dealing with this problem implicit in an earlier discussion is to recognize that as well as a complexity of process, courtship has a complexity of structure arising paradoxically out of the indeterminacy produced by the openness of the mate-selection system in modern Western societies. It may be that such a recognition serves as a useful starting point around which more complex models could be built up. In any event it should be clear from much of what has been said earlier that categorical homogeneity is a variable which needs explicitly to be built into any such model rather than to be taken simply as a given. In specific terms this means that the character of the pool from which mates are drawn is a matter for empirical determination. A restricted field of eligibles should not automatically be assumed. Furthermore, room must be left in the study of courtship for variations in the trajectories which lead couples into marriage. This means that one cannot simply rely on the kinds of linear filtering models proposed, for example, by Kerckhoff and Davis. It is clear from the present study that filtering processes may operate in courtship but

also that they need not.

Contextual studies refer to those which deal with the immediate social environment within which mate-selection takes place. In ethnographic terms at least this is an area very much more widely investigated in non-Western societies than in rather more familiar contexts. As previously indicated it is here that the sociology of deviance and labelling theory in particular has a useful sensitizing role in pointing, for example, to the problematics of supply which face those seeking mates and to the societal reaction which greets the choice which is actually made. One particularly useful feature of this literature is the attention which it pays to how rules come into being. Familial, sexual and relational behaviour has for long been governed by formal rules emanating from religious and state bureaucracies. The creation, development and evasion of such rules potentially provide a rich sociological furrow which has implications both for the historical and contemporary understanding of family life (Anderson, 1979).

In statistical terms, of course, intermarriage is often rather more deviant than some of the other activities such as soft-drug use which form the staple diet of those interested in the study of discreditable behaviour. It is therefore appropriate that it should be studied in the same way, the more so since such study promises in its turn to play a sensitizing role in the study of non-conventional behaviour. This is so for at least two reasons. First of all while the sociology of deviance has looked at deviant individuals and deviant groups it has hardly, apart from some attention paid to sexual deviants, directed any attention towards deviant relationships. Secondly, the study of a topic like intermarriage places the question of informal reaction squarely in view. It is no longer possible for the topic to be treated in a residual manner. Indeed, if the findings of the present

study concerning the consequentiality of reaction which derive for the reactor from relational constraints are correct, the study of societal reactions focusses necessarily on expectations and obligations in interpersonal behaviour - a topic, after all, which forms part of the fundamental subject matter of sociology.

The neglect of longitudinal and contextual approaches to the study of intermarriage arises in part, as an earlier discussion will have suggested, out of the development of the literature within a geographically and, to an extent, historically specific context. The variety of differing situations and contexts within which intermarriages occur suggest that study of the topic might be enhanced through comparative or cross-cultural studies. What form such studies should take, though, is open to question. Certainly, ad hoc comparisons are possible between, for example, some of the couples studied in Northern Ireland and those described elsewhere, which suggest that similar kinds of individuals may be found in intermarriages based upon differing categorical distinctions. Thus the extensive though by no means total range of similarities between the 'emancipated' couples frequently described in the literature and some of those in the present sample have already been noted. Furthermore, there are intriguing parallels between the ecumenical couples described in the present study and those Indian-Western couples whom Cottrell (1971) describes as having an 'expanding world orientation', the goal of which was the transcending of national boundaries and the establishment of a unitary world culture. In addition, however, there is clearly scope for something rather more ambitious and rather more difficult.This might involve either holding constant intermarriage based on a particular kind of categorical distinction - Catholic-Protestant, say, or Black-White - while varying the social context within which it occurs, or, conversely, holding constant the social context while the categorical distinction varies.

Intermarriage and the conflict in Northern Ireland

Despite its deficiencies as a metaphor for intergroup relations in the United States (and leaving aside its unfortunate impact on the literature on intermarriage), the notion of the 'melting pot' has always had, seemingly, something of a seductive character perhaps because it proposes a heroic role for those who intermarry as the tearers-down of barriers. If at the same time the notion of the melting pot has retained a semblance of sociological good character, it is because it also embodies the insight that it is the quantity and intensity of interpersonal ties across group boundaries which has consequences for intergroup relations. In this respect the impact of intermarriage on the integrity of group boundaries in Northern Ireland is minimal. Intermarried couples are too few to generate a large volume of kinship ties across the Catholic-Protestant divide. Furthermore, as was seen earlier, even where such ties do exist they appear very often to have a character which permits the intensity of the relation to remain somewhat attenuated, while additionally, in a system of segregated education which threatens to force their children into a mould from which they wish to escape, there remains the incentive for intermarried couples to migrate.

Nor do the intermarried in Northern Ireland form a discernible group around which might coalesce institutional or political structures which might mitigate the effects of polarization. Furthermore, their own perception of their vulnerability, their ability to become socially invisible through their own efforts and through the assumptions of others, make the possibility of such a grouping unlikely, while the organizational form which has emerged to service couples' needs remains likely to have only a limited appeal.

Leaving aside the ecumenical couples who perhaps have a rather Utopian vision, it is further unlikely that one can find in the experiences of intermarried couples in Northern Ireland a model for the establishment of a non-conflictual situation in Northern Ireland. They do, though, help to illuminate what one might call 'Leyton's Paradox'. Although the thought may well not have been original to him, Leyton's Paradox concerns the apparent anomaly that the murder rate in strife-ridden Northern Ireland is half that of peace-time Detroit. The question posed by this paradox has informed not only work by Leyton (1974) himself, but can be found implicitly in Bufwack (1975) and in Harris's (1972) remarks on the relation between 'Ballybeg' and Northern Ireland. It is: Given the structural cleavage which runs through Northern Irish society, the persistence of the conflict there and a situation which produces soldiers and the accoutrements of war as everyday sights on the streets of Northern Ireland, how can we account for the ethnographic evidence which has repeatedly shown that local communities remain unshattered by conflict? The answer usually given to this question will be noted in a moment. One can also note, however, that the question itself can be given a different form. If harmony is typical of local communities in Northern Ireland, why does not peace break out 'from below'? Or to put this differently, what has rendered ineffective the various attempts to mobilize the Northern Irish population into movements for peace?

Although they vary in their details the accounts the authors (referred to above) give to explain the anomaly of a society-wide conflict and local-level harmony are in agreement that small-scale social units which bring Catholics and Protestants into contact in Northern Ireland contain conflict-dampening mechanisms of various kinds. Among those which have been described are an ideology that the informal

relations in a particular community are uniquely harmonious and that 'trouble' has its sources outside the local community, acceptance of a dichotomized social milieu, and where necessary the avoidance of contentious topics. Looked at in a very general sense these of course have a familiar ring to them. It was also the case that the small-scale social units under consideration in the present study - Catholic-Protestant courtship and marriage dyads - variously relied on just such mechanisms.

Perhaps because one can see the mechanisms more clearly in this last context, it is possible to speculate on their consequences. If, of course, the conflict did not exist there would be no need for the kinds of mechanisms described. In a sense, however, not only does the conflict exist but it is an integral part of the process of maintaining non-conflictual relations in small-scale social units. These rely precisely on the disjunction between the interpersonal and the wider social structure - between the immediate environment and that beyond it. It is this in turn, one suspects, which gives these mechanisms a self-limiting character for in these situations the wider environment can never directly be confronted, so neither are the wider structural issues which require resolution.

One of those wider issues concerns the role of the Roman Catholic Church in Irish society. The present study does provide the possibility for an assessment of the actual impact of the Roman Catholic regulations relating to 'mixed' marriages which form the subject for continuing debate and ill feeling between the major religious bodies in Northern Ireland. It will be remembered that it was suggested that an excess of Catholic ceremonies in the case of interfaith marriages and an excess of Catholic children born to such marriages was less the result of compliance with the Roman Catholic regulations than it was an indirect consequence of patterns of marital

selection. This in turn might further suggest both that the Catholic Church has been credited with rather more power than it actually possesses and that it can possibly afford to be rather more accommodating in the matter of its regulations than it has been previously. If its legislation in fact fails to secure what it has been designed to secure, and if in so doing another institutional goal - that of friendlier relations with other Churches - is undermined, it may be that nothing is lost by replacing the offending rules.

Concluding note

It should be clear that the present study has been overtaken by events in Northern Ireland. The era of street protests and the surface liberalism of the O'Neill period has given way to a rigid polarization and a prolonged internal war. It is likely that the upward drift in intermarriage rates detected in the 1960s has been halted or more likely reversed. Paradox is of course possible, as can be seen from the suggestion that the 'troubles' may have brought an upsurge in the incidence of 'mixed' marriage by changing activity patterns. It may be that in the present climate couples forming relationships can more effectively legitimate their relationships because they are presented with an even sharper contrast between the degree of harmony they may attain within the relationship and the intractability of the situation outside the dyad. Even so, the ability to claim, as did some of those in the sample, that one had remained untouched by the divisions in Northern Irish society must now be difficult to sustain. Furthermore, the kinds of contexts which allowed others in the sample to proceed into a courtship relation without hindrance from their antithetical views perhaps have diminished in number.

# PART IV : APPENDIX and BIBLIOGRAPHY

# AIDE MEMOIRE

## BACKGROUND (for each partner)

Place and date of birth

### Family

- characteristics: size/composition
- class/religiosity/political involvement
- relations with parents and siblings
- informal religious socialization
- previous out-marriage among kin

### Schooling

- types of school attended
- level of attainment reached
- religious and political socialization
- attitudes towards school: positive/negative

### Area

- religious composition
- class composition
- in-group/out-group relations
- degree of contact
- feelings of closeness or distance
- awareness of stereotypes

## COURTSHIP CAREER

- commencement
- previous relations: numbers/patterns, mixed/non-mixed
- use of recreational sites
- opportunities for cross-sex/cross-religious meeting
- attitudes of friends to cross-sex/cross-religious partners
- preferences for partners
- sexual mythologies

## THE PRESENT RELATIONSHIP

### Meeting

- circumstances of meeting
- kind of meeting site
- first impressions
- how first perceived religious difference
- feelings of unease or tension
- reluctance/eagerness
- awareness of status differences

### Development of the relationship

- tempo of development
- how became involved
- how perceived involvement
- reluctance/eagerness to become involved
- turning points towards greater commitment
- areas of conflict/bargaining/avoidance
- changes in stereotypes

## MARRIAGE

- when decided to marry
- how decision came about
- was there a formal engagement
- what kind of ceremony was chosen
- reasons for choosing kind of ceremony
- attitudes to Catholic regulations
- whether Catholic dispensation applied for
- priest hostile/friendly/officious/dissuading
- whether dispensation obtained
- who attended ceremony/stayed away
- who sent/did not send wedding gifts
- who attended reception
- what happened at reception

PARENTAL REACTION

- parental attitudes to mixed marriages where known
- whether parents knew of relationship
- whether parents knew it was mixed
- attempts at information control by couple
- how parents came to know of relationship/mixed nature
- did parents react positively or negatively
- form of positive reaction
- form of negative reaction
- were sanctions applied to both partners
- arguments used to dissuade couple
- was there a spouse-candidate presentation
- what happened during spouse-candidate presentation
- how was negative reaction dealt with

REACTIONS OF OTHERS

- how siblings/wider kin/friends/acquaintances/neighbours reacted
- threats/intimidation
- how coped with reactions of others/threats

MARRIED LIFE

- how long married
- relations with parents since marriage
- how often parents seen
- parents seen by both partners or only by own son/daughter
- do both sets of parents interact
- relations with neighbours/colleagues since marriage
- whether mixed nature of marriage disclosed
- areas of conflict/bargaining/avoidance
- ways of dealing with conflict
- changes in stereotypes
- how many children
- plans for children
- how decided on religious upbringing of children
- how decided where to live
- people seen most often

DEMOGRAPHICS

- ages
- occupations
- educational attainment
- duration of marriage
- level of religious involvement

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